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BORLAND HALL.

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BORLAND HALL

BY THE AUTHOR OF
OLRIG GRANGE

Glasgow
JAMES MACLEHOSE
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To

The Right Honourable W. E. Gladstone, M.P.

Whiles thou wer't in thy plenitude of power,
Dispensing England's bounty, I dared not
Offer my gift, as if thy gifts I sought,—
Though sweeter to my heart than Spring's first flower,
To know that thou had'st whiled away an hour
O'er my last nameless book, with all the care
Of Empire on thee: now I do not dare
Withhold my homage, when the people shower
Their honours elsewhere, and their slights on thee—
Noblest of those that by the Throne have stood,
And made it strong by making us more free,
And, healing wrongs, and doing timely good,
Wherefore I haste to brighten my new page
With the great name that brightens all the age.

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Book First.

TEMPTED.

College Life.

THERE'S an old University town
Between the Don and the Dee,
Looking over the grey sand dunes,
Looking out on the cold North Sea.
Breezy and blue the waters be,
And rarely there you shall not find
The white horse-tails lashing out in the wind,
Or the mists from the land of ice and snow
Creeping over them chill and slow.

Sitting o' nights in his silent room,
The student hears the lonesome boom
Of breaking waves on the long sand reach,
And the chimring of pebbles along the beach :
And gazing out on the level ground,
Or the hush of keen stars wheeling round.
He *feels* the silence in the sound.

So, hearkening to the City's stir,
Alone in some still house of God
Whose solemn aisles are only trod
By rarely-coming worshipper,
At times, beneath the fret and strife,
The far-off hum, the creaking wain,
The hurrying tread of eager gain.
And all the tide of alien life,
We catch the Eternal Silence best,
And unrest only speaks of rest.

O'er the College Chapel a grey stone crown
Lightsomely soars above tree and town,
Lightsomely fronts the Minster towers,
Lightsomely chimes out the passing hours
To the solemn knell of their deep-toned bell :
Kirk and College keeping time,
Faith and Learning, chime for chime.
The Minster stands among the graves,
And its shadow falls on the silent river ;
The Chapel is girt with Life's bounding waves.
And the pulses of hope there are passioning ever.—
But death is life, and life is death ;
Being is more than a gasp of breath :
We come and go, we are seen and lost,
Now in glimmer, and now in gloom ;
But oft this body is the tomb,
And the Life is with the silent Host.
So to living and dead let the solemn bell call ;
Sleeping or waking, time passes with all.

In the old University town,
Looking out on the cold North sea,
'Twixt the Minster towers and the Chapel crown.
On a winter night as the snow came down
In broad flakes tremulously,
Falling steady, and falling slow,
Nothing seen but the falling snow ;
A youth, with strained and weary looks,
Sat by a table piled with books,
And a shaded lamp that gleamed among
Pages of writing, large and strong.
A glance of sharp impatience flashed
Out of his dark and deep-set eye,
As he lifted his head, and hastily dashed
The hair from a forehead broad and high :
For there was a crash and a clamour and ringing
In the room overhead, and a chorus singing,
As the bell tolled midnight from the graves,
And ere its slow deep note had died,

The chime from the College crown replied,
And then came the boom of the breaking waves.

Some twenty and three years he had seen,
Or more perchance ; 'tis hard to tell
The age of a face so strong and keen,
The years of a form that was hardened well
By the winter's cold, and the summer's heat,
And the mountain winds, and the rain and sleet.
Big-boned, with a look of unformed power ;
In body and brain and passion strong :
Over his square brow fell a shower
Of black hair, waving and thick and long.
It was a great brown hand that grip'd
The pliant quill o'er the blotted sheet,—
No soft and clerkly finger that slipt
Over the pages glib and fleet ;
More like that of a man with sword equipt,
Grasping the hilt his foe to meet.

An eager, strenuous spirit, meaning
To do with might what he had to do.
And rarely trusting, never leaning,
But self-reliant and bold and true :
A nature rugged and hard and strong ;
Yet, as among the rocks and fells,
Where most the storms rage loud and long.
The deepest silence also dwells,
And there are brightest mossy wells
Among the nodding heather bells :
So in his stormy spirit dwelt
The hush of that religious sense.
The silence of that great reverence
Which the strong and brave have always felt :
Nor less the tender beauty wrought
By fresh well-springs of feeling deep
Which murmur as they softly creep,
Like dreamy waters through his sleep,
The Love that brighteneth all our thought,

The Love that sweeteneth every lot.

In the room overhead a clamour rang,
But hushed for a moment, as some one sang
Cheery and clearly, each note like a bell
Floating the words off, round and well.

PARTY OF STUDENTS IN THE UPPER ROOM.

First Student. Look, how Darrel is moping; ask
him to sing;

They are dull fellows poets, unless they can get
All the say to themselves: there he stands in a pet,
Like a hen on one leg with her head 'neath her wing.

Second Student. Nay, let him alone; Cupid hit
him last night;

I heard the sharp twang of his bow, and it broke his
Poor Muse's wing, who came down, in sad plight,
With a flutter of anapæsts, dactyls, and trochees.

Third Student. Come, Ralph, pluck up heart, man,
and give us a stave:

Love is life to the poet, like wind to a ship,
It will give you a song, though she give you the slip,
Which you'll sing at her wedding, or sigh o'er her
grave;

For the song is as much as the Love to the poet;—
'Tis the fruit, and the passion was but soil to grow it.

Song—SHE IS A WOMAN.

She is a woman to love, to love
As flowers love light;
All that is best in you is at its best,
All the heart opens to her as a guest
Who makes it bright.

She is a woman to love, to love
With soul and heart;
And all in her that is sweet and true

She makes as if it were drawn from you

By gracious art.

You cannot help but love, but love ;

Nobody can ;

She carries a charm with her everywhere,

Just a circle she makes in the air,

Bewitching man.

Is it her beauty I love, I love ?

Is it her mind ?

Is it her fancy, nimble and gay ?

Or her voice that spirits the soul away ?—

I cannot find.

But she's just a woman to love, to love.

As men love wine

Madly and blindly: yet why should they

Bring their hearts to be stolen away,

When she has mine ?

First Student. A fig for your love-ditties ! Cupid's
an ass,

And the wise man will drown the small elf in his glass.

Second Student. Ha, ha ! lads, I told you our
Ralph had been hit :

Now, guess the rare mixture of beauty and wit.

Third Student. Nay, we name not the name of a
damsel of honour ;

Enough that such verses come showering upon her.

Now for something more stirring. I sing like a horse :

But here's for the old land of heather and gorse.

Sings—UP IN THE NORTH.

Up in the North, up in the North,

There lies the true home of valour and worth :

Wild the wind sweeps over moorland and glen.

But truth is trusty, and men are men,

And hearts grow warmer the farther you go,

Up to the North with its hills and snow.

Ho ! for the North, yo ho !

Out of the North, out of the North,

All the free men of the nations came forth ;

Kings of the sea, they rode, like its waves,

Crash on the old Roman empire of slaves,

And the poor cowed slaves and their Cæsars saw

Rise from its ruins our Freedom and Law.

Ho ! for the North, yo ho !

Up in the North, up in the North,

O but our maids are the fairest on earth.

Simple and pure as the white briar-rose.

And their thoughts like the dew which it clasps

as it blows ;

There are no homes but where they be,

'Woman made home in the north countrie.

Ho ! for the North, yo ho !

O for the North, O for the North !
O to be there when the stars come forth !
The less that the myrtle or rose is given,
The more do we see there the glory of heaven ;
And care and burden I leave behind
When I turn my face to the old North wind.
Ho ! for the North, yo ho !

First Student. Psha ! your patriot-song now is
only sonorous ;
And besides, people laugh at us talking so grand,
And praising ourselves, and our crusty old land.
Come, I'll set you a catch with a rattling good chorus.

Song—O THE CHANGES OF LIFE !
O the changes of Life ! every five or six years,
There's a new body fitted on us, it appears,
Like a new suit of clothes made in old-fashioned
modes,

The newer the older—and so where's the odds?
But hand round the beer, and let it run clear,
The older the better the body of beer.

We change our opinions, we alter our laws
For the sake of a change, or for some other cause,
We change our old country, our altars, and gods,
That's but passing our small-change—and so where's
the odds?

While they leave us our beer, all beside may change
here,
For our Capital sum is the pottle of beer.

O once it was classics—all Latin and Greek,
Then came mathematics each day of the week.
Now it's German and Nature, but every one plods
With his pipe and his beer—and so where's the odds?
Smoking and beer! they make Nature appear
Teutonic and wonderful, smoking and beer.

Erewhile there were battles of Tories and Whigs,
But they've gone to the Limbus of powder and wigs;
Pitt and Fox would'nt know the new parliament
modes,

But they'd find the old ale—and so where's the
odds?

Amber-bright beer! let no change come near
The wise, ancient custom of smoking and beer.

All.—The wise ancient custom of smoking and
beer.

Third Student. Come, no more of your catches.

Ralph; let's have a stave
With a touch of the pathos, like that which you
gave

At the Doctor's last evening: I noted his eye:
How he sipped his glass daintily while it was dry!
How he gulped it in tumblers a frigate might float.
With the tear in his eye, and the lump in his throat!

You may roar out a chorus, lads: but to my thinking,
There is nothing like pathos for good, steady
drinking.

All. Ay, ay, Ralph, touch up the feelings a bit;
And let each prime his glass: weeping's drier than wit.

Darrell. But nothing will please you. Well, never
mind;
The birds sing their songs to the trees and the wind.

Song—MYSIE GORDON.

Now where is Mysie Gordon gone?

What should take her up the glen,
Turning, dowie and alone,

From smithy lads and farming men?—

Never seen where lasses, daffing
At the well, are blithely laughing,
Dinging a' the chiolds at chaffing:

Bonnie Mysie Gordon.

Mysie lo'ed a student gay,
And he vowed he lo'ed her well:
She gave all her heart away,
He lo'ed naething but himsel':
Then he went to woo his fortune,
Fleechin', preachin', and exhortin',
Got a Kirk, and now is courtin'—
But no his Mysie Gordon.

Every night across the moor,
Where the whaup and peewit cry,
Mysie seeks his mither's door
Wi' the saut tear in her eye.
Little wots his boastfu' Minnie,
Proud to tell about her Johnie,
Every word's a stab to bonnie
Love-sick Mysie Gordon.

A' his letters she maun read,
A' about the lady braw ;
Though the lassie's heart may bleed,
Though it even break in twa ;
Wae her life may be and weary,
Mirk the nicht may be and eerie,
Yet she'll gang, and fain luik cheerie,
Bonnie Mysie Gordon.

Whiles she thinks it maun be richt ;
She is but a landward girl ;
He a scholar, and a licht
Meikle thocht o' by the Earl.
Whiles she daurna think about it,
Thole her love, nor live without it,
Sair alike to trust, or doubt it,
Waesome Mysie Gordon.

Mysie doesna curse the cuif,
Doesna hate the lady braw,
Doesna even haud aloof,
Nor wish them ony ill ava :
But she leaves his proudfu' mither,
Dragging through the dowie heather
Weary feet by ane anither ;
Bonnie Mysie Gordon.

First Student. A sell ! a sell ! why, I've emptied my
glass :

And it's only a fellow that jilted his lass.

Second Student. I wonder now, Ralph, you can
look in my face !

We asked you for pathos, and lo ! commonplace.

Third Student. Silence ! there ; Ralph, you must
try it again.

Hark ! how the sea moans : give us a strain
Caught from the wail of the lonesome main.

Song—THE FALSE SEA.

I.

Singing to you,
And moaning to me ;
Nothing is true
In the false, cruel sea.
Where its lip kisses,
The sands, they are bare.
Where its foam hisses,
Nothing lives there ;
When it is smiling,
Hushed as in sleep,
It is beguiling
Some one to weep.

II.

They were seafaring,
With light hearts and free,
And full of the daring

That's bred of the sea :
It crept up the inlet,
And bore them away
Where it laughed in the sunlight,
And dimpled the bay,
Singing to them,
But moaning to me,
Tripping it came,
The cold, cruel sea.

III.

I heard the oars dipping,
I heard her bows part
The waves with a rippling
That went through my heart.
And I saw women weeping
And wringing their hands
For the dead that were sleeping
That night on the sands :

For nothing is true
In the false cruel sea
Which is singing to you,
And moaning to me.

Long and loud the clamour rose,
Bells were ringing, doors were banging.
Feet were tramping, glasses clanging ;
Seemed the racket ne'er would close :
And listening to the uproar loud
Thus his thoughts upon him crowd.



Austen Lyell.

Crash ! crash ! there they go, Ralph Darrel and Hugh,
And little Tom Guild, and that jovial crew.
First, cups in the tavern, and brawls in the street,
A springing of rattles, and scuffling of feet,
A laughter and screaming of girls, and a thud
As of some one that falls in the slush and the mud ;
Then a rush up the stairs, and tramp, tramp over-
head,
With a Babel of speech that might waken the dead,

A clinking of glasses, and ringing of bells,
And song after song till the daylight draws near—
Ralph sings like a bird, how his voice trills and swells !
And the rogues make a chorus that catches the ear :
Love song and drinking song, madrigal, glee,
Breaking in on the long-rolling boom of the sea.

What to do with their tramping and chorusing so
Through the still hours of thought, with the lamp
burning low?

Let me read as I will, I read nothing but words :
And somehow they run into quavers and chords—
Metaphysics in music, crabbed Latin in tunes,
With no more clear meaning than so many Runes :
At the trick of the singer they trip in light
measure,

But shake from their folds the fine thought which
they treasure.

What to do?—Why not join in their jolly carouse?

Ralph's a splendid young scamp, and has plenty of

nous,

Ay, and more Greek and Latin than half of the fellows

Who are cramming for honours, dull, bilious, and

jealous.

Now, were Socrates here, and saw how they mope,

And travail in pain with a theme, or a trope,

And drag out a thought as with pulleys and cranks,

How his jests would go crack like a whip on their

flanks !

But for Ralph—there the Greek eye would brighten

to witness

His beauty and vigour, his swiftness and fitness

For wisdom or valour, for pleasure or power,

For speech to the Demos, or maid in her bower,

For bridling the wild horse, or quaffing the bowl,

Or holding discourse of the gods and the soul :

For dear to the sage was a beautiful youth,

And the wholeness of manhood was precious as truth.

And I too am young ; and my blood too is hot
With the lust of all broad roads where pleasure is got.
They think me a bookworm, a winner of prizes,
Full of priggish decorums, and learned surmises ;
Precise as a Puritan ; feeding on Scholia,
And Elzevir classics, and black Melancholia.
Yet the craving of passion is gnawing within,
And the strong human hanker to dally with sin.

Ho ! a flask of old wine, grey with cobwebs, whose
scent

Made the grim spiders jolly in bloated content.
Rare toppers ! no fly buzzed their darkness, or brought
The grossness of appetite into their thought ;
Nor bubble nor bead marred the rapture divine,
But they netted aroma, and breathed the bright wine,
And folding the cork in their mouse-coloured wraps,
They boozed on, and dreamt not of time and its
lapse.

And 'O for my Horace's Daphne or Phillis,
Low-browed, and breathing of wreathed Amaryllis ;
How her eyes beam, and her golden curls break,
Like tangled laburnum drops, round her white neck !—
Shell-tipped her fingers are, taper and long,
Tripping she comes to me, lissome and strong,
Yet coy too, and hard to be caught, till I kiss
The blushes and dimples, and revel in bliss.

Why not? Why should phantoms of beauty and
grace,

Pink and gold with the sunniest hues of delight.

Hang like clouds in their glory before the warm
face

'Of our youth, as it comes, in its morning and might,

Shining and singing and fresh with the dew,

Yet all be but shadows, and nothing be true?—

All but vanity, dream and inanity,

Nothing to shower down a blessing on you !

How was it that Goethe in full measure tasted
All that Life had to give him, nor missed aught,
nor wasted?

Sat Shakespeare alone thus, and heard the dogs bark,
Like an owl in a barn staring into the dark,
And warming its five wits to find out the mystery
Of this wonderful world, and its wonderful history!
Did they shrink from love-tryste, song, or bright-
beaded wine,

As if only the dulness of life were divine?

Nay, their nets swept the stream of our full-flowing
gladness,

Its still pools of thought, and side-eddies of sadness;
Where life was the deepest, and passion was strong.
They fished in its waters, and lingered there long,
And so they were rich in the glorious sense
Of a wealth of golden experience.

And what is it all for—this heaping of ashes

On the hot fire of youth till you smoulder its flashes?—
This stating again of our hopeless imbroglios,
And dulling the brain with the dust of old folios?
There's my old school-companion, Dick Gow of
the Glen,
With the brains of a half man, and labours of ten ;
How he toils on, and mopes over volumes patristic,
And dogmas forensic, and rites eucharistic,
And fictions of law, that he calls gospel verity,
And tries to believe he believes in sincerity.
Meanwhile in the glen where his childhood had
been
Stands the lowly turf hut, where the house-leek is
green ;
Near by it the burn rushes hurrying down
Through the rocky gorge headlong, and turbid, and
brown,
Or glistens o'er slippery shelves, green with long moss,
Where the maiden-hair tresses stretch half-way across,

Or sleeps in the pools where the speckled trout play,
And leap to the fly as the evening is grey,
Or sings through the woodland its few plaintive bars
To the slender oak-fern, and the pale sorrel-stars.
There, cramped with rheumatics, and bending with age,
His grave father sweats at the ditch and the hedge,
And sisters and brothers are patiently drudging
From day-break till dark, unrepining, ungrudging,
And all, as they stint food and raiment and fire,
Have but one hope that cheers them—to see the
Kirk spire

In the glory long prayed for, when crossing the hill,
Lo ! the folk are fast gathering from farmstead and mill,
From the shepherd's lone hut in the deep mountain
shade,

And the wood-ranger's hid in the dim forest glade,
All to hear their boy preach the great Gospel, and
sever

Himself from the old home and old life for ever.—

That's the end of his struggle, when Priesthood has
 riven

The fondest of earth's ties, and bound him to heaven;
Has sundered those hearts that were loving and true,
And linked him now fast to the Laird, and the few
Respectable folk who have nothing to do!

Or there is young Barbour; his factoring father
Heeds of nothing but charters, and wadsets, and
 leases,

Rotations of cropping, and how he shall gather
Biggest rents for my Lord whose waste daily increases.
But his boy, he must ponder high questions of Law,
And store up old precedent, rubric and saw,
Load his memory daily with cases in point,
Learn the sharp fence of Logic to pierce through a
 joint

In his learned friend's reason, and parry his hits,
Or to pester a witness half out of his wits.

Great the thoughts of his youth, to determine all right
By the law which the landlords have voted is Light
For ever immutable, sacred, divine,
To the serf of the glebe, and the thrall of the mine.
So his days and his nights shall be spent, and his
youth

Dried up into parchment, amassing the truth
Which entails the broad acres of meadow and corn,
And the heath-purpled hills where the wild deer are
born,

And the fish of the river, and bird of the air
To the high chosen people for whom the gods care—
Whose the anointing is, whose is the money,
And whose is the land, with its milk and honey.
So he squanders bright youth with its wonder and awe
For a wig and a gown, and this vision of Law!

O! but Culture? and what all the culture we get?
Old furniture crammed into "Lodgings to let,"—

Nothing blending in harmony, graceful in beauty,
Or meet for a high life of courage and duty ;
Only that which will pay : for our culture is meant
Not to make noble men, but to make cent per cent.
We touch on all topics, but nothing we know ;
We open all questions, and still leave them so ;
Never look to the end of them, dare not abide
By the issues we raise, but glance ever aside ;
For there is not a lie, spite of God's high decree,
But has made its nest sure on some branch of our
tree,
And has some vested right to exist in the land,
And some who will have it the tree could not
stand
If the sticks, straws and feathers, that sheltered the
wrong,
Were swept from the boughs they have cumbered
so long.

Ah ! we climb up our Alp, though each step that
we gain

Is a loss to our life, made with labour and pain—
First, the dwellings of men go, bright eyes and
white arms,

And the song and the dance, and love's hopes and
alarms ;

Then, the many-flowered glades, and the many-
leaved woods

Where the startled deer watch, or the meek cushat
broods ;

Next, the pines and the heaths and the ptarmigan
fail,

And the rock, grey with lichen, is swept by the gale:
Till at length, with the hum of life hushed far below,
We are wrapt in a cloud on a chill peak of snow.
And for this we toil on through the years, all our
way

Growing barer and poorer as, day after day,

We reach a new point more with gloom overcast,
Where the silence is deeper than that we have passed,
And the range of life narrower still than the last ;
Till the clinging mist crawls over lichen and stone,
And we are wrapt in it, and stand all alone.

Let me toss to the wind every dream ; let me know
All that Nature full-blooded, full-handed, can show ;
Let me touch at all points the whole life that man
 lives,
And taste with a relish all pleasure it gives,
Link the sweet notes of music with sweet words of
 song,
Wreathe the arms in the dance, and go tripping along,
Kiss the peach-blossom cheek, rich with life's glowing
 dyes,
And know the wild rapture of love-gleaming eyes,
Crown the cup with its flowers, purple lip with old
 wine,

And let young vigour rage—is not passion divine?
Ah! we grow hydrocephalous, swelling the brain
At the cost of our manhood, till thinking is pain,
And the surfeited mind labours wearily through
A task which the healthful Greek lightly would do—
Lightly and laughing, for subtle and strong,
He lived at full pitch, and his life was a song.

Why, what demon is this, with the logic of Hell,
That pleads for the wild Beast within me so
well—

The Beast that was doomed to a Cross by the
Three

Awful names that are named in the great Mystery?
Down, down, thou foul fiend! Hence to leprous
romance

Of the *demi-monde* poisonous mushrooms of France.
Better sin like a man, doing after his kind,
Than sit here cold-blooded, debauching the mind.—

Hark ! Ralph sings again, but he sings all alone,
And he wails now, poor fellow, the days that are
gone.

Song—THE HOURS.

Brown, gipsy hours with white teeth laughing gay
Came trooping by me, when a child at play,
And with their coaxing stole my life away
Where bird in bush was idling all the day.

Soft, roguish hours, that in the gloaming peep
At woodland nooks a dewy tryste to keep,
Stole my young life away, and in a heap
Of rose leaves, sweetly smelling, hid it deep.

Dark, robber hours, like burglars in the night
They broke into my house, by cunning sleight,
And bound me fast, as with a spell of might,
And reft my life away ere morning light.

The idle bird is silent on the tree,
The rose leaves withered now and scentless be,
The spell is broken ; lo ! mine eyes can see—
O thievish hours that stole my life from me !

Lost, lost ! and now the mists, low trailing, screen
The visioned glories that I once have seen,
And all the hours are grey and cold and mean—
Lost, lost my life—and O the might have been !

So the young soul to darkness is hopelessly wending—
And this is the dream that I dreamt, and its ending !
But why was it ever dreamt ? How could I spirt
The froth of that dead sea, or stir up its dirt ?
Ah ! we strike a few chords ere the music we play,
Preluding the strain, as if light fingers stray
Dreamily over the keys, till they find
The melody shape itself clear in the mind ;
So we dream, and from dreaming we glide into act,

And our life is the dream in a rhythm of hard fact.
And can this be the prelude to mine, like the moan
Of the sea as it laps the curved sand or the stone
In the moon-glimmered bay, while its far depths
are stirred

By the throes of the storm that is coming? I've
heard

That the knight, ere he buckled gilt-spur to his heel,
Or belted his thigh with the good sword of steel,
Laid his arms on the altar, helmet and shield,
Breastplate and banner, and watched there and
kneeled

All the long night on the pavement of stone,
All the long night in the darkness alone,
All the long night, while fiends in the air
Plied him with terrors, or strove to ensnare;
But I, what a watch have I kept!

Here suddenly he rose, and stood

By the window in dreamy mood.
The snow had ceased to fall, and lay
White o'er all the level reach,
White to the sand-dunes and the beach
Where the tumbling breakers fell,
And what was snow, and what was spray,
It was hard for the eye to tell.
The broad, white moon was hurrying swift,
Trailing her pale skirts over the drift
Of the flying clouds; and through a rift,
Here and there, in the distance far,
He caught the gleam of a throbbing star;
And away to the north was a band of light,
That wavered like the sheen of spears
Swaying about in some ghostly fight—
For all was ghostly in that wan night,
And the shadows passed like fears—
Wan the moon looked, and wan the cloud,
And wan the earth in its snowy shroud.

So, as he gazed, his eyes grew dim,
And moon and stars were hid from him
By some strange mist, and then the mist
Shaped itself into forms, I wist :
And he saw his old home, 'neath the wooded hill,
Between the bridge and the red-roofed mill,
And the village near it, sleepy and still.
O'er the high pine-tops the clouds were creeping,
And all the heavens were grey and cold ;
And he was aware that Death was there,
For amid the hush was a sound of weeping,
And as it were muffled, the kirk bell tolled.
Was it the bell?—or only the boom
Of the waves that mixed with his dreamy thought?
Whose face was that in the darkened room?
The features changed in the shadowy gloom,
But the passionless calm, it changèd not.
Sometimes, he thought it was his own ;
Sometimes, it had his mother's look ;

And his quivering lip gave a low, faint moan
At the pathos of its still rebuke.—
Had he broken her heart by the way he took?
But the vision that lingered most
Was the form of one he had loved and lost.
Brightest and gayest spirit He
Of all their College company,
With deftest Reason, keenest wit,
And glory of high poetic thought,
And laughter whose infection smit
Whether you caught the jest or not;
And the bearing frank, and the winning way.
That take you like a summer day
Blithely smiling upon your way.
And Austen gave him worship true,—
For youth will have its idol still,—
And he was older, a year or two,
And took the worship as his due,
But paid it back, with heart and will,

In kindly help, and counsel sage,
And elder students' patronage.
So, day and night, they hardly parted,
They were so one and loving-hearted;
They read together, walked together
In summer sun, or winter weather,
Their very thoughts were but one strain,
Played by two instruments in tune;
Each gave the other's back again,
As in the gloamings late in June,
The throstle from the branching lime
That on the topmost twig is swinging
Echoes the throstle that keepeth time
From the topmost twig of the tall elm singing.
But then there came a cloud between them,
And they were not again seen as men had seen
 them.
For he had made a quarrel, and gone
Drifting on his path alone,

Followed by the yearning look
Of the friend he had forsaken,
Haunted by its pained rebuke,
And the thoughts it would awaken.
Thus he drifted on his way
Like a ship that from the bay
Melts into the night, and we,
Standing powerless on the shore,
Know not of its destiny,
Only see it nevermore.
But life was spent ere youth was gone,
Love had lavishly been wasted,
And flavourless the sweets he tasted
Ere he passed away, and none
Knew the way that he had gone.—
That was the face in the shadowy gloom
Which mostly haunted the darkened room ;
But the features changed with his changing thought,
Only the dead thing changed not.

Then Austen ; Can this be a dream I am dreaming ;
Yet I see the clouds drifting o'erhead, the moon
gleaming

On the cold hard blue of the sea, and the stars—
Ló ! yonder the Pleiades, yonder red Mars ;
But they seem to shine in through an oak-panelled
ceiling

Which is solid and real, with a weird, alien feeling,
As if they were the shadows, and it alone true.
And thou, my first friend, whom I loved, and I drew
My very soul's life from thee ; though we were parted
In sorrow and anger, half broken-hearted,
Yet I still kept thy place in my love, like the nest
Of the swallow, held sacred, and looked for its guest
To bring back the summer again ; can it be
I shall ne'er clasp thy hand again, nevermore see
The light of the old days together with thee?—
Or was it the shadow of Fate that I saw
On my old mother's home, with a chill sense of awe?

She is not what she was, and her letters have strange
Longings of late in them, hinting of change.
She used to be hard, though as true as the steel.
And is not one to utter the half she may feel ;
Now she'd fain have me with her, is weary alone
In the wild winter evenings ; and ere she is gone
There is so much to say ; yet I must not let that.
Or the thought of her, hinder the work I am at.
That is not like her, somehow ; its mild, mellow light
Is soft as the gloaming that fades into night ;
Yet here have I been adding shadows of sin
To the shadow of death she is walking in ;
Help me, O God, that my life may yet prove
True to Thy thought, and the hope of her love.

From the old University town
Looking out on the cold north sea
He carried high honours down
To his home in the hill country:
And proud was the mother that bore him then,
Though little she said, for that was her way:
But all the village, and all the glen,
When they saw her, dressed in her meekest grey,
Walk to the kirk on Sunday, knew
That whether the sermon was old or new,
Whether the prayers were brief or long,
Or the psalms were all sung out of tune,

Or the doctrine all unsound and wrong,
Or the service stayed till after noon,
This once at least, she would not hear
For the voices of triumph that filled her ear :
And bonnets, too, might be gay and bright.
And ribbons flash in the gleams of light,
And eyes might turn from the pulpit, too,
To gaze at the young laird's stately' pew ;
For once the sin would be forgot
Of garment gay and wandering thought ;
And sooth to say, they blamed her not.
They liked the youth ; and learning still
Is more esteemed among the folk
Who till the glebe, or watch the flock,
In lonely glen, or silent hill,
Than wealth of gold ; and also he
Was wont to mix with them pleasantly :
And it was as if honour had come on them all
When he stood up among them grave and tall.

At the smithy door, or the bowling green,
Hurling the quoit, or rolling the ball,
Foremost student the year had seen.



Book Second.

STUNNED.



.

Gorland Glen.

AS you come over the hill, a little way down, the
road

Suddenly sweeps to the right, and lo ! a green valley
and broad ;

Through it a river runs swift, its water broken by rocks
And boulders, cleaving its way as by rapidest bounds
and shocks ;

Now with a clear rush on, and now recoiling again
To wheel round the barrier huge, it has hammered
for ages in vain,

Only dinting deep holes in its ribs, and chafing
itself into foam,

Then swirling away to the bank to bite at the softer
loam.

Yonder an old Peel tower, hid in clumps of the ivy green,
Perched on its crag like an eyrie, and there the
whole valley is seen ;

Not an approach South or North, East or West, but
the watchman's eye

Would catch the sheen of the spears, and the banners
would well descry,

And sound the alarm in time for hoisting the draw-
bridge high.

Away to the right on its lawn, close-shaven by
mowing machines,

Stands the house which the great cotton-lord built
out of his bobbins and skeins :

Bran-new, all gables and turrets and chimneys, stack
upon stack,

Something top-heavy it looks, and bare too and
cold, but the lack

Of trees is made up by acres of glass for magnifi-
cent vineries,

Palm-houses, ferneries, cucumber beds, and great
melon-frames and the pineries.

Far at the end of the valley, open three narrow
glens,

Each with its own marked features, charactered
clear as men's,

Each with its own fair water finding its fitting way,
Rough o'er the rocky channel, or still by the
broomy brae.

That to the left is rugged ; one side, a bare bleak hill
With a cataract, rugged, of stones down-rushing as
if they would fill

The glen with grey desolation ; and half way down
a thorn

Seems as it stayed the torrent, and was bent with
the weight and worn.

Only that thorn on the hillside grapples the stones
with its root,

Only some scraggy hazel bushes straggle about its foot,

Only the curlew wails there, and the grouse-cock
crows at morn:

Only the goat and the coney poise on those stony
heaps,

Only the parsley fern along their barren spaces
creeps.

And far below in the hollow the stream goes plung-
ing on

From the rocky steep to the rocky pool, and the
rumbling boulder stone.

The middle glen is wooded; there the ancient lords
of the land,

Leaving their high-pitched eyrie, built a stately house
and grand

Right under the Murrough-crag, pine-clad up to the
top,

And they belted the woods all round them, and
bade the highways stop,

And they made them a goodly forest, stocked with
the wild red deer,

And they drew the stream into fishponds, and swept
with their nets the mere.

The wild deer bound in the woodlands now, but
there is none to care,

And the trout are fat in the fishponds, and the
water-lily is fair,

Stately and grand the house is still, and the ter-
raced gardens fine,

But the young lord comes not ever—he is drinking
the beaded wine,

Or pigeon-shooting by Thames, or marking the red
by the Rhine.

Fair is the glen to the right, in its pastoral beauty still,

Green in its holms and hollows, green to the top
of each hill ;

A line of alder and drooping birch marks where its
river flows,

But in its bare upper reaches only the juniper
grows :

The stream comes out of a tarn on the hill, whose
oozy edge

Is fringed with a ring of lilies and an outer ring of
sedge ;

And there is no road beyond that, only a mountain
high,

And a cairn of stones where the withered bones of
The Three brave brothers lie.

Now, at the mouth of that green glen, hid in a
bosk of trees,

The oak and the beech and the chestnut, and lime
honeyed haunt of the bees,

And the yew and the ash, and many a shrub, blossomy, fragrant, green,
Nestled a quaint old mansion ; bit by bit, it had been
Built now and then, as they could, yet it rambled
somehow into shape,
Picturesque, here a low gable rising step upon
step,
There a long corridor broken with quaint dormer
windows, and then
An old square tower of rough rubble, built for the
rough fighting men ;
But the front is all draped now with creepers, with
scarlet and golden flower,
Till it looks in its summer beauty like some fairy-
haunted bower,
Hid in its bosk of trees, under the shade of the
hill
Where the river sweeps clear from the bridge down
to the red-roofed mill.

Austen sat there with his mother, alone at the close
of day,
Sat with a visage perplexed, while she looked hard
and grey,
With furrows drawn deep on her forehead, and
temples fallen away
Into blue-veined pits, and you plainly saw the
shadow of death on her face,
But she sat erect in her chair, high-backed, and
sternly held her place,
As if she would say, While there's breath in me,
lo ! in weakness I will shew
Weakness to no one, but keep at arm's length the
terrible foe ;
So, with a Bible before her, and a spinning wheel
at her side,
Hardly and sharply she spoke, and he, with bated
breath, replied.

Gorland's Widow.

I am your mother, and Scripture saith
Thou shalt honour me until death ;
Yea, not even death shall set you free
From the honour and duty owing to me ;
For what I have willed, and signed, and sealed.
Ere I go to the other world, worse or better,
Though it wound with a wound that shall never
 be healed,
Thou shalt carry it out to the uttermost letter.

Now, wilt thou promise me this, or no ;
And get my blessing before I go ?

Yes, there is something upon my mind,
Ill to keep there, and worse to tell ;
Yet it's borne upon me that I must find
A way to utter it, ill or well,
To you of all men, and only you.
Sooner than speak I would die the death,
But death will not come to me till I do ;
And O I am weary of life and breath.
Yet my lips shall be sealed, as death can seal them.
And the Devil may shuffle the cards, and deal them
To all of you, as he did to me,
If you will not swear to me faithfully,
Over the Book here, to do my will,
Whether you reckon it good or ill.

Oh ! you will do all that a son may do,

In honour and right, for his mother's name !
Fine words ! But "honour and right" from you !
As if your old mother would set you to
Work of dishonour and deed of shame !—
But perhaps you have reason—who can say ?
Maybe I taught you to lie and to cheat,
And drink and steal, as well as pray :
A rogue is but half a rogue, incomplete
Till he burst out a full-blossomed hypocrite ;
So I brought you up in the good old way,
But to fit you the better for deeds of dishonour
Your wicked old mother had taken upon her !—
Nay, none of your fondling and kissing and weeping ;
That's not in my way ; I'd as lief you were heaping
Your fine-scholar words into fine tricks of speech—
Though they bite in the quick, and stick fast as a
leech.

I am your mother, and loved you well,
But I never could babble and prattle, or jingle

Nonsense-rhymes like a fool with a cap and bell,
Or an idiot bird in the dewy dingle
Squirming away to the gaping forms
That care for nothing but slugs and worms.
Baby or boy, it was not from me
That you learned to be mawkish and womanly.

Cautious and scrupulous !—You have no doubt
You can do what I wish, but you just wish to
know it !—

Go, leave me alone ; I can die here without
A love that has nothing but fine words to shew it.
Ay, ay ; you'll do well for yourself in the end,
Ne'er to sign a blank cheque for lover or friend,
'Treat the dearest on earth as a possible rogue,
'Trust none but yourself—it's the wisdom in vogue,
'The counting-house wisdom, proper for those
Of the clerk and the shopkeeper kind, I suppose.
And yet I've heard say, by wise men in my day,

That none are outwitted so easy as they
Who reckon with all men as if they suspect them,
And traffic in caution, and watch to detect them.
But no doubt, you're wise ; far wiser than I ;
Go your way, then, and leave your old mother to lie
In the death-grips of nature, and wrestle it out,
With a weight on her heart and a fire in her
 brain,
In death as in life, alone with her pain,
Alone with the devils within and without.

A minister ! Tush, they are feckless gear—
All of the kind now I see or hear.
I have been kirk-going all my life,
As maiden and mother, as widow and wife :
It was the thing that we had to do,
Ever as Sabbath or Fast came due,
Girl and boy, young man and maiden,
Burning with passion, or sorrow-laden ;

Though why we did it I never knew,
Only that others did it too.
For they mostly are dumb dogs, turning round,
And scratching their hole in the warmest ground,
And laying them down in the sun to wink,
Drowsing, and dreaming, and thinking they think,
As they mumble the marrowless bones of morals,
Like toothless children gnawing their corals,
Gnawing their corals to soothe their gums
With a kind of watery thought that comes.—
Bonnie-like guides with their *whilly-why*,
All about loving, and nothing of law;
All about Gospel, and nothing of hell,
All tinkle-tinkling like a bell,
And telling you ever that all is well.
I heard their sough; but all the time
I would con the words of some Hebrew prophet,
That crashed on the soul with an awful chime,
Like charges of guilt and sin and crime,

And burnt them in with the fires of Tophet.
Ah ! these were men : but your minister,
Nowadays, is a weak kind of milliner :
Shaven and smooth, the creature stands
With soft white hands, and long lawn bands,
His weak chest panting a plaintive whine,
As he turns into water the sacred wine
Given by the prophets strong and divine.
That's the one miracle he can do,
Turning the wine into water true.
Leave the minister, then, to his Sunday's sermon :
We have matters of earnest to determine.

So you promise me now to do my will,
Whither you reckon it good or ill.
There, let me see how best to begin
The old, old story of trial and sin.

Look from the window, boy, and see

The bonnie green braes of Borland glen ;
Cornland and woodland and lily-white lea,
Up to the skyline, hill and tree,
All will be yours to the waterhead
Where it flows from the bosom of big Knochben,
And the Kelpie's pool lies dark and dead
Under the great rocks, towering red,
And only the ripple of water-hen
Stirs its surface, now and then,
As she oars her way from the outer edge
Through the bending ring of spotted sedge,
And the ring of water-lilies, within,
That fringes with beauty the dark pool of sin.
O but Borland Glen is dear to me ;
It cost me dear ; but it is not that :
Nor yet for its wealth do I love to see
Its soft round hills, or its meadows flat ;
But summer and winter I've been there,
Till it filled my heart, and unaware

Its beauty stole away my care.
There are green oak woods on Briery-brae,
And sleek are the kine on Fernielea,
Blithe are the holms of Avongray,
And the sheep walks good on Ard-na-shee,
And wild thyme blooms, and pansies grow
On many a knoll where harebells blow ;
And I sat, and dreamed there long ago.
And yet this day I cannot see
Green oak-scrub, or milk-white lea,
Or the drooping birch, or the red pine-tree,
Cows knee-deep in the aftermath,
Or lines of sheep on the mountain path,
Nothing of all I cared for then—
Nought save the frightened water-hen
Rippling the pool beyond the edge
Of water-lily and spotted sedge.
But all the long, green glen is mine,
And I'll pay the price that it may be thine :

I counted the cost when I had it to do,
And I will not shrink when the bill is due.

You were a baby when I came here,
And I was a widow of half a year,
Poorly left when your father died :
But I was not one to sit down and pine,
And wring my useless hands and whine,
While work might be done, and the world was
wide.

So I came to keep house for the laird, for all
Was going to wreck here in Borland Hall :
And he was a far-off cousin ; I trow
He counted kin with my mother somehow.

He was a widower, and he had
Only a girl to heir the land ;
Never before had they failed of a lad
To follow his father, good or bad,

And take the reins from his failing hand.
And it irked the laird, though he loved her dearly—
As well he might, his bonnie May,
For meet her late, or meet her early,
Ever she met you blithe and gay ;
Ever so dainty, white and saintly,
Scented ever with perfume faintly,
Flitting like butterfly over the green
In clouds of muslin soft and clean,
With a flower in her hair, and a song on her lips,
Thrilling with joy to her finger-tips :
Yet fondly as he loved the maiden
Tripping about in the garden trim,
Like a gleam of light, with her figure slim,
Now and then he was heavy laden
That Borlands of Borland should end with him.

I liked her not from the first, for she
Came ever between me and a thought

Growing up in my heart, and warming me
With a hope that gladdened my widowed lot :
But soft and silly, she knew it not,
And vowed she should be broken-hearted,
To be like me from my baby parted.
I liked her not, but I will not lie,
It was partly because she was better than I,
For I was not good, and I did not try.
There are people whose blood is honey and milk,
And people whose veins are filled with gall ;
As some are born to the gold and silk,
And some must be beggars, and go to the wall :
There's a higher than we that orders all.
She was gentle and good, and I was not ;
But I had the wit and the keener thought.

So all the while I hated her :
She stood between me and the thought
That silently in my bosom wrought,

Like the leaven that makes so little stir,
Yet changes every grain of the meal;
I knew it was there, but did not dare
To bring it forth to the open air,
And face the thought which I liked to feel:
Till one day—I can ne'er forget—
She bent across the Kelpie's pool,
To seize a water-lily wet,
That shewed its egg-cup, yellow and full,
Just outside the fringe of sedge,
As the water-hen oared from the muddy edge;
When plunge into the loch she fell,
And I felt my heart leap with the hope of Hell.
At first, she laughed, then screamed, I ween,
As deep she sunk in the muddy slush;
A little more, and there had been
But a bubble of air, and an awful hush,
And the whish of the sedges in the wind,
And the laughter that rippled my heart and mind.—

Nay, stare not so with horror ; I
Wished it, but did not let her die ;
I was not wicked enough for that,
Though I felt my heart go pit-a-pat,
And it was not with sorrow or fear or pain :
But I knew the thing that was in me then.
It was not of myself I thought,
It was not for myself I wrought,
It was not self that prompted me,
It was the love I bore to thee :
I only sinned, if sin was done,
But O I sinned for thee alone :—
And yet you look on your mother's face
With a horror-stricken and ghastly stare !
I tell you I was not near the place
When her stifled scream rose in the air :
But I ran, and drew the silly fool,
Draggled and dazed, from the Kelpie's pool.

That night he vowed that he would make
A home for you in Borland Hall,
And love you for your mother's sake,
Only next to her who was heir of all ;
And what less could they do or say
To her who had saved the bonnie May?

Thus it was that you came here.
And then my way of life was clear.
I saw you playing among the flowers.
I heard your laugh in the ringing woods,
O'er the tiny nests, and their tiny broods,
And I swore that the land should all be ours.
You were but a child, not two years old.
But your looks were sunny, your ways were bold,
And the Laird was fond of you. Had she been
A baby like you !—for a moment I thought of it.
Till I plainly saw that I could make nought of it—
You might have married the pretty May-queen :

But she made a doll of you, petted and kissed you,
Told you stories, and *deared* you, and dressed you,
Called you her wee pet darling, and won
Your love so, she turned my heart into stone ;
For I—I was selling my soul for you ;
And there was she, coming between us two.
I was not a young mother, and had but you,
And she, with the wealth of her youth, would steal
The only joy that my heart could feel !

Coming about the house just then
Was one of your fine-feathered, gay young men,
Curled and scented, ringed and gloved,
Selfish and useless, and feeble of will,
With nothing to do but his time to kill,
Take care of himself, and be tenderly loved,
Quote the old Poets, and sing the new songs,
And talk about younger sons and their wrongs
In the evil days he had fallen upon,

When they had to compete with the grocer's son—
One of the sort that Fathers hate,
But girls will fancy to be their Fate.
Idly he loitered, shooting and fishing,
And mending the world in the evening with wishing;
Idle and listless. What could I do?
Was it my affair how he came and went?
I could not be keeping her always in view;
And I did tell the laird, and I warned her too,
But she only looked injured innocent.
So he came and went, though her father forbade,
And I saw her sicken of love to the lad,
Sicken of love, and saunter away
Through the woodland paths in the evening gray,
Looking so listless till the hour,
Looking so fevered when it came;
And I just stood by my drooping flower
Quietly seeing her play my game;
And who shall say that I was to blame?

The laird did not blame me, with all his wrath,—

And terrible was the storm which broke

• That morning when the household woke,

And the little bird was not found in her nest,

Nor flitting about the garden path,

Nor came evermore to be caressed,

Or to fasten the dewy flower in his breast.

And he never looked on his bonnie May

After she wedded her popinjay.

The laird was a fool—He was sharp with his wit,

Critical, clever, but still a fool.

With scheme after scheme he was fever-smit.

And somebody always made him a tool :

But when he was most in his logic-fit,

Then most of all would he play the fool.

Now, he would lay you out plans sagacious,

Of planting, draining, and strange manures :

Brimful now of reforms audacious,

O but he had new-fangled cures,
Would have poisoned the sweet-breathed cows in
the byre,
Only we flung the rank trash in the fire—
Every one knew the laird and his way,
And quietly heard what he had to say,
But none for a moment thought to obey.
He was never so happy as when he had
Poets and painters, good or bad,
Actors and fiddlers and editor folk,
Fishing the water from bank and rock,
And gathered at evening round his table,
Jesting and drinking, as each was able,
And story-telling with laughter long,
Till the early cock from the roost would crow,
And the laverock lilted his morning song,
And it was time for the maids to go
Away to the kine on the meadows low.
O but there was no care or thrift,

Only how to spend, and how to shift,
How to borrow, and how to lend ;
And nobody looked to the bitter end.

There would be botanists now to dine,
Dry as their withered leaves and flowers !
We did not stint their meat and wine,
We did not grudge the weary hours,
Pottering along the glens and brooks
With microscopes, or fishing-hooks ;
But when they spoke of shrubs and trees
In other lands beyond the seas,
Nothing would do but the laird must send,
And bring them here from the far world's end,
Though where to plant them nobody knew,
And they rotted away in the sun and dew.
And prints and pictures must be bought,
Wherever the money was to be got,
When he had artist visitors,

Though they covered the walls, and stood on the floors.

And crowded out in the corridors :—

Dusty rubbish that cost a ransom.

And our rhymers and fiddlers and actors gay

Were always borrowing something handsome,

And always forgetting the time to pay.

But the laird must be patron of all the arts

When he should have been seeing to ploughs and
carts ;

And food and drink were never spared,

The factor's books were never squared ;

And groom in the stable, woodland ranger,

Scullion wench, and lass in the byre,

All were living at hack and manger,

With hardly a peat for the parlour fire :

And had I not taken his gear in hand,

The laird would have lost every acre of land.

So I looked into this, and saw to that,

And had my eye upon everything :
There was not a tinker, or beggar's brat
Got handful of meal from the kitchen bing,
Nor a toothless tyke, or a useless cat
Was left to lie on a rug or mat,
Doing nought for its meat and drink,
But only to lie in the sun and wink.
I taught the household, man and maid,
To waste not a crumb of their master's bread,
To waste not an hour of their master's day,
Gadding about as it was their way ;
But to rise with the sun the whole year round,
And to work with the sun in house or ground :—
God was working, and so must we,
They could rest on the Sabbath as well as He :
They must do their duty to man and beast,
Ere they get food or wage off me ;
And I would not see their master fleeced,
And brought by their waste to poverty.—

We had many sharp words ; but sharper still
The ways that I took to have my will.

He was angry, of course, when they complained :—
I counted on that—he was grieved and pained ;
For Borland Hall had always been
Noted well for its kindly ways
To beast and body, and all who had seen,
Feckless creatures ! the best of their days ;
And from mother to daughter, as each had grown.
Service there had been handed down.
I only said, “ We must begin
To save the money we cannot win :
And all had been waste, and spendthrift all,
In stable and bothie, in byre and hall ;
But service should be service true,
If I had anything there to do.
Fitter it were his father’s son
Should clip and pare at the other end

Where the waste was most, and the ruin done ;
But they were neither kith nor friend,
That saw, and did nothing to make or mend,
Was there not a bond on Brierybrae?
And a wadset heavy on Fernielea?
And what would he do when his hairs were grey,
And the fiddlers had fiddled his land away?
And it was breaking my heart to see
The wanton waste upon every hand
That was robbing him both of house and land."

Thus it was that, day by day,
And bit by bit, I got my way.
I scraped and pinched, but I saw to it
That the laird was served with all things fit,
All in their season, good and plenty :—
He was just the man to be nice and dainty.
And I gathered moneys, here and there,
To meet his bills when they came due :

He had careless grown from very care ;
To be able to pay was something new,
And resting on me, scarce aware,
He had more of ease than he ever knew.
That made him think ; so he brought to me
Papers to find what his debts might be ;
He had tried to make out, but he tried in vain ;
They bothered his head till it ached with pain.

That was just what I wished ; so I summed up his
debts,
And sorted his papers, bills and bets ;
And I made him give heed to the plans I laid—
At least he agreed to all I said,
And learnt to lean on me, and leant.
We thinned the woods, and raised the rent—
The land was good, and underlet—
And the running bills, with their heavy per cent,
And all the careless rust of debt

We began, at once, to be clearing off,
Learning never to mind the scoff
Of fools that trust in a chance to-morrow ;
Learning the worth of honest thrift,
And the shabbiness of the debtor's shift.
So happily now the days went by :
Our geniuses were not so many,
But happier we for the want of any :—
Always hungry, and always dry,
Always hankering for the penny,
Always forgetting the time to pay ;
I found the means to keep them away.
We were not patrons now of art,
We heard not many sayings smart :
We got not dedications fine,
Nor long accounts for costly wine :
We were not the great man we had been ;
We saw not the grand days we had seen ;
But plack and penny we paid our way,

And were not afraid of the reckoning day.

He leant on me, and took to you ;
But he came in the end to stint and pare
Now that he had not a child to heir
The hoarded wealth, as it daily grew ;
And I think I scorned him for his greed
Even more than for his wastefulness :
It was myself that had sown the seed,
And yet I scorned him none the less ;
He was less of the gallant gentleman,
Since all his thoughts upon money ran.
He grudged my wage, he grudged to you
The schooling meet and the clothing due,
And I think it was only in hope to save,
And keep together his goods and gear,
That he wedded me, when he saw his grave
And the end of all things drawing near.
But wedded we were, and then he sent,

And signed and sealed with the Notary,
And over all the land he went—
The land he had orderly willed to me,
To hold and keep, sell or dispone,
Ploughland and pasture, hill and wood,
Fishing and messuage, every rood,
All the rights, as they had been his own,
And his fathers before him, ages gone,
From the big Nine-stanes to the Kelpie's pool,
And along the hills to the skyline clear,
The good corn lands by the kirk and school,
And the sunny haughs for kine and steer,
The bonnie green woods of Briery-brae,
And the long sheep walks, and the peat moss
 blae.

It is all set down in a clerkly hand,
And he writ me heir of all the land.
He was sane in mind and body as you,
And he went to kirk and market too.

Boy, look not on me so glum and cold :
I did nothing was wrong ; or if I did
It was all for you, that you might hold
Your own with the bravest, and none forbid.
And so you shall too, whatever they say
Of me,—it's little I care for them ;
For if I have sinned, I am ready to pay
The stake that I lost when I played my game.
But I did nothing wrong, I did my duty ;
And the girl was vain in her wilful beauty ;
And he would never have named me heir,
If the thing that I did had not been fair.
And your right, at least, has never a flaw ;
It is sound in morals, and clear in law :
My soul may suffer—that's my concern ;
It can hardly be worse than it has been of late,
It can hardly be worse though it frizzle and burn
In the quenchless fires of the sinner's fate.
But with me and my guilt, you have nothing to do ;

And you've pledged me your word, if they plea it
with you—

She and her popinjay husband are dead,
But there were children, people said,
And it's not to be doubted they'll try the law,
And search the will for a loop or flaw—
But you'll grip to the land, and be laird of all
The bonnie green glen, and Borland Hall.

What say you? what?—You cannot do it!
You take back your word that you gave ere you
knew it!

You palter with faith, and play with an oath,
Hard on your mother, and false to your troth!
You have scruples, forsooth, to do my will,
But never a scruple to break your word,
Never a scruple, although you kill
The mother that bore you, and loved you still
Better, woe's me! than she loved her Lord!

Can it be I have sold my soul for nought,
Counting the cost, and ready to pay?
Shall I fail in the thing so dearly bought?
And you—will you be the one to say,
“She gambled away her soul for me;
And only the Devil shall profit by it?”
Hark! how the wind is howling! see
The storm is out in its maddest riot;
How the great trees moan and creak, and toss
Their big arms, hairy and rough with moss,
And shake to their roots with the sudden shocks!
Terrible to the cowering flocks.
I knew *they* would come, and let them come:
I never had faith in the dainty hum
Of new-fangled doctrine buzzed about,
As if Hell and the Devil were all a doubt.
But let them come; I am well content
Eternal justice should be done,
And the guilty reap their punishment,

And the Lord be true, and He alone.
But I have your oath, and I hold you to it,
And earth or heaven may not undo it,
Your oath on the book, and you'll keep it truly,
And grip to the land I have willed you duly.
If her bairns are poor, there is money in hand,
Quite as much as the worth of the land
When I took the charge of it;—give them that :
I have not squandered goods or gear,
Nor wasted any gift I gat
On belly or back, this many a year ;
But seeing the break-neck laird of Rhynds
Racing as fast as horse and bet
Could run him into the black Gazette,
I thought we might add his scrubs and whins.
Some day yet, to our bonnie glen—
They're better sport for gentlemen.—
But give them the gold, if they make a rout ;
Maybe it were a good turn to me,

If you helped them a bit in their poverty,—
But that's little better than papistry.—
Only grip to the land, and plea it out ;
It is yours by right, there is never a doubt.

Scarce were the words from her mouth, when, lo !
the hand with its puckered skin
Powerless fell at her side, her side that was all
drawn in
By a sudden stroke, and her eyes were hard and
set, and she tried
Vainly to say something more. Wildly he pled with
her, cried
For pity to the great Heavens, but she nor they
replied ;
And so it went on through the night, until at cock-
crowing she died.



Book Third.

BROKEN.



The Funeral.

ALL the day long, and the next night he sat,
With the dread Presence, in that chamber dim.
And neither stirred, nor uttered any word,
Nor ate nor drank ; and much they grieved thereat ;
And greatly wondered, greatly pitying him :

Nor spake, nor stirred, nor gave one sign of life.
Or knowledge of the life that still went on,
Like one a-dream, or like a frozen stream
With the ice-grip upon its fret and strife
So fixed was he, and changed as into stone.

Stony his face, his feelings stony too,
Stony and icy was the hard, set eye,
And stony felt the heart that would not melt,
And all his weary world a desert grew,
A wilderness of stones, where dead men lie.

Hushed were the household, as they came and went
A-tiptoe through dim lobby, and dusky room,
And whispered low of that heart-breaking woe
Which lined the young face as it sternly leant
On the clenched hand, and never changed its gloom.

They brought him dainties which he never saw,
The choicest of the vintage, old and rare ;
They culled fresh flowers he loved in happier hours,
And laid them near him with a silent awe,
But they all knew he knew not they were there.

Two days he sat with that awed Silence dread,
Death's silence, deeper than to be alone,
And you could hear hearts beat for very fear,
Noting the corded hand, and fixed head
Which stared at that white Form with eyes of stone.

For as they went in pairs, and passed his door,
The charm of terror made them pause, and look,
And by the sight rouse to more utter fright
Their beating hearts that trembled so, before,
Reading alone some weird and ghostly book.

Eerie and lone, the east wind moaning low
Billowed the carpets high on lobby and stair,
The timid mouse went pattering through the house.
And from the roof a spider dropped below,
Knotting its thread to his unmoving hair.

The dog howled from his kennel, and his chain
Harsh grated, as the owl screeched from the barn,
A phantom fear seemed ever creeping near,
And in the wood the wild cat yelled amain,
Or boomed the bittern from the lonely tarn.

He heeded not, for nought outside he knew,
Swept by the rush and whirl of maddening thought,
And deaf and blind, with agony of mind,
At that dark tale which ever darker grew,
And all his soul to desolation brought.

For she had been his bulwark 'gainst the sea
Of doubts that lashed, and vexed his unquiet spirit;
His forest-land that kept the desert-band
And drifting sand-storms from the fields which he
Cultured and kept that God might them inherit.

Him she had straitly trained in ways of truth
And righteousness and piety and awe,
Nor spared the rod to drive him unto God,
But with a ruthless method taught him ruth,
And schooled him in the Gospel by stern law.

Yet for that all she taught was surely good,
And for that she exalted God supreme
In all she did, and all that she forbid,
And for that love wrought in her hardest mood,
To him she had been type of worth extreme.

Now, Heaven and all the gods rushed madly down,
Like Dagon's house when its main pillar fell :
And truth and right, and all things clean and white.
Angel and saint, and the Eternal crown,
All, all were lost in thickest mist of Hell.

Gone the fond vision of his trustful youth,
Gone all the awe of natural reverence,
Gone the pure love that seemed of heaven above,
Gone all the certainty of worth and truth—
The Hell-mist clouded every higher sense.

Could that be true which she, in falsehood, taught?
Could that be good, which, being ill, she praised?
And O the pain, the ache of heart and brain!
To think that mother could be base and naught,
On whom as God's stern witness he had gazed.

For still our common Heaven is seldom reared
On solid arch of reason, firmly built,
But the high Faith that has to vanquish death
Rests on the lap where first we prayed, and feared.
And wondered in the dawn of thought and guilt.

Still lies its weight on mother-love and truth ;
And O the sorrow if her truth should fail !
Still its strong bands are fatherly commands ;
And O the weakness when they break ! and youth
Finds its Heaven dark, and hears the night-winds wail !

On the third day, he went out on the hill,
And wandered restless, yet unwearying ;
Then sat him down, and with a rigid frown
Gazed steadfast on the yellow tormentil,
And little milk-wort peeping through the ling,

Yet saw them not, though ever afterward,
When black clouds came and memory of those days,
The bare green hill, and yellow tormentil,
And the blue milk-wort on the mossy sward
Rose like pale stars amid the wildering haze

Long there he sat, as one by some fell blow
Stunned, which had loosened every joint and band,
And cast into amazement strange and new
All ordered thought, so that he did not know
The marks and bearings now of sea or land.

But coming from the breezy mountain top,
They saw a change, and yet with pain they saw :
For lightsome now, the cloud swept from his brow,
Jest fierce and bitter from his lips would drop,
And reckless laugh that made them creep with awe.

Far stranger than the silence and the gloom
Seemed now the order sharp, and word precise,
And the hard reason that sounded out of season,
And satire grim that mocked the very tomb,
And clear, cool sense prompt with its fit advice.

Seemed never madness like that perfect sense,
Seemed never raving like that reason clear,
So out of place, so without touch of grace;
Even dull, dim souls that were of judgment dense
Drew off, estranged, and shivering, and with fear;

Which made him harder than he was before,
And tipped his mocking speech with sharper scorn,
Till they were all met for the funeral,
When the mad impulse taunted them, and tore
Away the mask from every face forlorn.

For all the sweet dews of his youth had been
Turned as to nipping hoar-frost, for a time,
With crystal spike, and angles of dislike,
Which sharply pricked them as with needles keen,
But chilled his own heart with their bitter rime.

This was his thought, These neighbours all have known
The shameful fact, and yet have silence kept ;
They made no din, for wealth can gild a sin ;
They never told me, that I might atone,
But fawned like beaten hounds, and round her crept.

Hollow and false my life, and this they knew ;
Hollow and false, but yet I knew it not ;
And she is gone, and I am left alone,
To right the cruel wrong I did not do ;—
So bitterly he spake from bitter thought.

The Will.

Kinsmen and friends and neighbours, all of you
Giving me the sad honour of your presence,
I thank you, as I surely ought to do,
For judged by looks, you are not here for pleasure :
I see each face shaded by doleful gloom,
I hear but dismal whispers round the room :
And therefore the good custom of our land
Offers you wine and cake and potent spirit,
Which the sad heart, by scriptural command,

Should take upon occasion fit to cheer it :
Drink, then, and stint not whisky good or wine,
Your souls are heavy, and the cost is mine.
Friends, I am young ; I wot not how the chief
Mourner should act on such occasions solemn,—
Whether to bury my face in handkerchief,
Or stand up silent as a marble column.
I never saw a funeral before,
I never saw such faces as I see,
I never heard such creaking of a door,
And no one swearing at it furiously ;
Perhaps I should be silent, or should groan—
All of you did it when our Pastor here
Spake of the crown which had become her own
The moment that she left our lower sphere ;
Forgive me, friends ; I am not used to these
Appropriate moans, appointed agonies,
Which sigh the weary to their place of rest,
And groan the saints to mansions of the blest.

The Pastor spoke good words and excellent—
I hope his name is mentioned in the Will ;
It will be hard to have canonized a saint,
Yet find no church or cleric codicil
For all the charity that did by her
Handsomely, as became her minister—
Yet everybody groaned, and looked as sad
As if the glorious crown were something bad.
Now, for myself, when once the wick is crushed,
I ask not where the light is, which is not,
Nor where the music, when the harp is hushed,
Nor where the memory which is clean forgot.
Death comes to all, that's certain ; heaven and hell
Are just as you believe, or don't believe :
But Faith is hard, and therefore we will leave
That matter, if you please, for time to tell :
But come or life or death, we all must dine,
And come or joy or sorrow, wine is good ;
And be her gathered savings yours or mine,

The Will must needs be read and understood ;
And therefore when we've laid her in the ground,
And smoothed the turf upon the lowly mound,
We'll dine here, if you please, and read the Will—
And by my Faith it will be rare to see
How sinks the glass of most sweet charity
At this bequest and that odd codicil.
Pray come ; I've killed my beeves and broached
 my wine,
The living die, but living, they must dine ;
The dead depart, but then their goods remain,
To soothe our sorrow, and relieve our pain.

Some murmured "Shameful !" "Shocking !" "Bad,
 too bad !"

"His mother's funeral too !" and "Drink, I fear !
"Enough to call down judgments on us all ;"
And others hinted that he must be mad ;
Yet all came back to feast, who bore the bier.

And there in the chief room the board was spread,
A banquet meet for the old gods to eat,
Odin and Thor and Balder, hungering for
The feast of victory, having slain their dead,
And gorged the ravens gathering for their meat.

The lordly Baron faced the large Sirloin,
And capon plump the haunch of generous boar,
Nor did there fail brown jacks of frothing ale,
And the strong waters, and the purple wine
Saluted all the mourners at the door :

Great beeves and bread, and smoking greens and
roots,
And fat sheep from the hills, and foaming cream ;
And jellies bright were quivering in the light,
And ice was sparkling near the ruddy fruits,
And the sun shed o'er all his golden gleam.

And seated at the head of that full board,
Outstretching his great limbs, his eye on fire,
Young Austen quaffed the brimming ale, and
 laughed

A scornful laugh, and bade his guests accord
Good heed to duty ere they fed desire.

We'll take the Will first, as a toothsome whet ;
It's hanging o'er us like a pending debt,
Spoiling all appetite, forbidding rest
With hopes uncertain of a rich bequest :
Lo ! here are cousins thrice-removed, but blood,
Thicker than water, sticks to one like mud.
When poor, they wounded not my mother's soul
With humbling gifts of money or of dress ;
But if they shrank with sorrow to condole,
They failed not to congratulate success,
But when she needed nothing, nought they spared
In costly tokens of their fond regard.

The Will, the Will, then! she was good and
wise ;

Their blushing virtues, no doubt, they forgot,
And did all this as though they did it not ;
And so the Will will be a glad surprise.
And you, her Pastor, faithful to your charge,
You scrupled not to tell her, round and large,
How hard the rich do find the way to heaven,
As camels through a needle's eye are driven.
She liked not sermons much, I must confess,
Even slighted them as marrowless dry-bones,
And wanting bread, she said they gave her stones.
But she could not forget your faithfulness.
A noble task yours, noblest man is given,
To shed on earth the light that shines in heaven.
To search the heart, unravelling all its wiles,
To cleanse the soul from all that it defiles,
To speak for God and righteousness and truth,
To solace age, and wisely guide our youth,

To bring together those whom sin had parted,
And to pour balm upon the broken-hearted ;
All this, of course, you did for her, and she
Could not o'erlook such pious ministry :
Nor yours, good doctor, ever at her call,
But never called, because she physic hated,
Moreover she was never sick at all ;
But still the yearly fee was ne'er abated,
Though powder, pill, or potion, great or small,
Blister or clyster, never knew in her
What healing virtues they might minister.

But where is she to whom the place belongs,
The bonnie May, so dear to all the glen,
Prankt with her flowers, and tripping to her songs
In those white clouds that witch'd the hearts of
men ?

Old neighbours, ye whose lives are memories
Of better days, when all was sunny and blithe,

And in the wet grass ye would stay the scythe
To catch her greeting smile at sweet sunrise ;
She came and went 'mong you a gleam of light,
That warmed the heart, and made the old Hall bright ;
There was no mate seemed good enough for her,
Nor any fate but that she would confer
Honour upon it, as religion brings
Glory and beauty to the highest things.
Of course, ye came to see how wrong is righted,
And justice to the orphan is required.
The Will, the Will, then ; let us have the Will ;—
For all our hopes are there ; and all it must fulfil.

They understood him not, but felt the tone
Of irony that hardened all his speech,
And mocking laughter that coming quickly after,
Crept fast, and tingled keen through flesh and bone,
With shock of shame as deep as words might reach.

But when the Will was read which all bequeathed,
Monies and lands, unto her only son,
Nor other name named, but with mark of shame
Or bitter taunt, a biting scorn that breathed—
A scorn she never hid, and spared to none ;

Straightway they rose in wrath, and left untasted
The ample viands, scowling as they went ;
And silent long, remembered now the wrong
Done to the heir, nor heeded, as they hasted,
His urgent pleas that they were weak and faint.

Surely they needed food, and must not go
Till they had tried his beeves, and drunk his wine ;
Would not the priest say grace for them at least ?
And might not some strong waters break the blow ?
But only the cool lawyer stayed to dine.

He stayed to dine, and yet he did not dine ;
For lo ! the heir must have the village poor
To eat the feast, unblessed by Christian priest ;
And he too high and dainty was, and fine,
And flouncing forth, indignant, banged the door.

So, with the lame and halt and maimed and blind,
And all the pauper world for miles about,
The feast was high, and noisy revelry,
And with their songs they startled the night wind,
And shook their tattered duds with drunken shout.

For he, with strange, wild recklessness would stir
All weird and eerie thoughts to feed his mood,
And nought too grim or *gruesome* seemed for him ;
Maddened, that night, by memory of her,
He shrank from all pure springs of bright or good.

And first, the crone who laid out all their dead,
Wrinkled, with one black tooth, one rheumy eye,
And loose, brown skin bearded upon her chin,
And on her nose a tuft of bristles red,
Crooned a weird ballad, grinning horribly.

EPPIE CURSHAK'S SONG.

Row him weel in his winding sheet ;
O but he luiks bonnie and braw !
Was that the brindled cat mewled at his feet ?
The muckle deil pickle her, tooth and claw.

Saw ye the wee, blue hole on his breast ?
O but his face is bonnie and braw !
No a moment for mess or priest ;
Hech ! but he would win easy awa.

Fair or foul, there was nane to see :
O but he luiks bonnie and braw !

And it'll be gowd tae you and me,
The æ drap o' bluid on his breast we saw.

There's a priest in the chapel—as white as death;
O but the face luiks bonnie and braw!
And he whispers a lady wi' burning breath;—
Cannie, noo, lass, or he'll girn and thraw.

Shut the windows, and licht the licht;
O but he luiks bonnie and braw!
And we'se be merry together the nicht,
Though she wring her hands till the red cock craw.

Then rose a tinker, lean and bony and tall,
Lanky and wild and free his unkempt hair,
A mighty man at flagon, cup, or can,
And Austen liked him better than them all,
And vowed he was the “angel unaware.”

The Tinker sings—THE GIPSY GIRL.

Mother, O mother, I've put away
Velvet and silk for the raploch grey :

Love is best !

Mother, O mother, my wedding ring
Hangs on the glass by a silken string ;
Golden chains are heavy.

Mother, O mother, if I could find
The rags that once fluttered in rain and wind—

Love is best !

Mother, O mother, the rags were true—
And O that I had not listened to you !
Golden chains are heavy.

Mother, O mother, who led the way
To the men who came from the ship in the bay?

Love is best !

Mother, O mother, shell and shot

Pitied him whom you pitied not.

Golden chains are heavy.

Mother, O mother, he did not die ;

He is coming again to me by and bye.

Love is best !

Mother, O mother, I love him still,

And if he says, Come to me, come I will.

Golden chains are heavy.

Mother, O mother, I heard the cry

Of a baby, all night, that was hard to die ;

Love is best !

Mother, O mother, my heart is wild,

And what shall I say when he asks for his child ?

Golden chains are heavy.

Mother, O mother, your lordling gay
Was wronged by my coming, not going away ;
Love is best !

Mother, O mother, the woods are green,
Yet it never can be as it once has been.
Golden chains are heavy.

So it went on until the morning broke ;
And when the morning broke he was alone,
The household all had vanished from the Hall
On the strange coming of the beggar folk,
And now again he felt his heart like stone.

One only word he spake ; “ O misery !
Never to see her, hear her nevermore,
No hope of change—O pitiful and strange !
And she went drifting on that sunless sea,
And she lies wrecked upon that silent shore !

“Mother, O mother!”—how that gipsy’s song
Sings itself in me! truly, “love is best,”
And “golden chains are heavy;” and the pains
Of sad hearts, stricken by a cruel wrong,
O what shall give relief to them, or rest?

“Dead! and this wrong unrighted, unrepented!
Dead! and to me this horrible bequest!
Dead! and my faith, too, dying in her death!
Mother, O mother!—if you had relented!
O Golden chains are heavy, and love is best!”

But at the morning’s dawn he rose and went
All through the house, and every window barred.
And every door he locked on every floor,
And with the keys his weary way he bent
Along the mountain pathway, rough and hard.

Faintly the sunshine tipped the clouds with red,
Faintly the spring-birds fluttered into song,
The mountain stream rippled as in a dream,
And dream-like in the mist the sleek kine fed
On the low meadows, moving slow along.

And slow and weary up the glen he passed,
Weary and slow amid the dim, slant light,
Until he stood beside the old pine-wood
Above the red crag which its shadow cast
O'er the dark pool, and water-lilies white.

All round the rim still rustled the tall sedge,
Broad leaves of lily paved the pool within,
The water-hen, unconscious now of men,
Oared herself, rippling outward from the edge.
And with her young brood paddled out and in.

And standing in the pine-wood's darkling shade,
He hurled the keys down, with a mighty curse
Upon his lips, his soul in dark eclipse,
And with the keys, the Will that she had made,
And strode in gloom across the moor and furze.

But as he sped along that trackless way,
Stumbling o'er snake-like roots that twisted white
On the black peat, and caught his hurrying feet,
The strong-knit moral fibre claimed its sway,
And kindlier feelings brought a sweeter light :—

A sweeter light that humbled him, and shed
Upon his jagged nature calm rebuke,
And made him hate his anger passionate ;
And by and bye he lifted up his head,
Knitting his forehead with a resolute look :

Lord God, to whom the hidden things belong,
Pardon my burdened, darkened spirit, long
Prying at every crevice of this wrong.

Burdened and darkened, mad to find some light,
And in my madness making deeper night ;
Calm Thou my heart, and help me to do right.

I do remember her, the gentle May,
Like a soft morning star whose melting ray
Hung, lingering dewy o'er mine early day ;

Faint as a dream of something white and pure,
A shapeless form that search would not endure,
Which ever changing, ever seemed unsure ;

Yet ever in its wavering loveliness,
It brought to me a sense of tender bliss,
Like lips that from the past clung with a kiss—

A downy cheek that warmly lay on mine,
And eyes that shined on me a light divine ;—
A shadow, and its voice an echo fine !

One task remains to me ; let me but find
The secret of those children left behind ;
No oath that binds to wrong can ever bind.

Or if it do, better the curse I bore
Than bind upon a mother evermore
This bitter wrong, and bolt her prison door.

Too late ? I know not, for He changeth not ;
Too late ? Our hearts change, and they change our lot ;
Who ever changed, and yet no mercy got ?

But be it fruitful of a curse on me ;
And be it fruitless, mother, now to thee ;
It is the right, and that is all we see.

Yet what to do, I know not. Once I thought
From those poor, aged folk I might have got
Some clue—but even his name is now forgot.

He was not of these parts—he came and went,
A bird of passage, a mere incident,
Lost in a glare of short-lived wonderment.

And where my mother lived in honour long
I cannot go and pry into this wrong :
“Mother, O mother!”—how that gipsy’s song

Clings to me ever, singing in my head :
Can he have known more than his ballad said ?
O sad work, raking ashes of the dead !

Book Fourth.

ADRIFT.



The Howf.

A LITTLE cottage, trim and neat,
The simple home of simple folk,
Stood by itself, well off the street,
Not far from where the two roads meet
Beneath the dingy Town-house clock :
The Howf, or haunt of favoured youth,
The envy of the lads who yet
Had to make good their love of truth,
Whether the way were rough or smooth,
By fearless thought or searching wit :

.

It was an University
For all the spirits bright and free.

Thither the Herr Professor came
With Madame Hester from the Grange,
And Darrel with the wasteful flame
Of Genius, burning for a name,
But wayward, full of whim and change ;
And thither Austen often went,
Drawn by a charm of mingled powers ;
And many a blithesome night they spent
In mirth and song and argument,
That sweetened life like gathered flowers.
Free were their thoughts, their words as free.
But all in truth and purity.

Weekly they met, and held discourse
Of science, and its march sublime,
And what is Matter, what is Force,

And what Creation, and the course
Of its development in time ;
Nor was the policy forgot
Of nations, though the man was more,
The nation less than in the thought
Of many, and they counted not
To remedy the ills he bore,
And fill his cup unto the brim,
Yet have no remedy for him.

And still their converse verged on things
More sacred, where the reason passed
From common earth, and needed wings
To soar up to those higher springs
That lie amid the shadows vast
Where God dwells, making darkness light
Unto the faith that can attain :
And some of them beheld the light,
And some were in a chill dark night,

And some were hesitating, fain
To give old words a novel sense ;
But all were full of reverence.

A sister and a brother there
Kept house together, rich in love,
And in the thoughts that filled the air,
And sympathies that everywhere,
Around, beneath them, and above
Found kindred souls and faithful friends,
For that they had the master-key—
The love that all things comprehends,
And opens every heart, and bends
All to its clear simplicity :
Artless and gentle, wise, and true,
All wise and gentle souls they drew.

Yet he was but an artizan,
And hardly twenty years had seen ;

A humble, absent, dreamy man,
Whose mind on mathematics ran,
Or planned some new machine ;
And guileless as a child was he,
Yet daring as a man who walks,
In his most meek simplicity,
In a far world of theory,
And with the hard world seldom talks,
Or tests his visionary thought
By the experience it has bought.

And he was greatly loved, but still
More loving, and by all esteemed
For upright walk, and curious skill,
Inventive thought, and stedfast will,
Yea, even for the dreams he dreamed ;
So true he was, and seeking truth,
So rich in multifarious lore,
So patient with impetuous youth,

So helpful oft their path to smooth
By drawing from his varied store,
So humbly reverent of the wise,
It humbled them to watch his eyes.

But she, his sister, fond and brave,
And jealous of his due respect,
Who rose up like a threatening wave,
And proudly curled her lip, and gave
Such glance of scorn, with head erect,
When some one risked a thoughtless jest
At his abstract and dreamy mood—
She held him wisest, truest, best;
And in protecting, but expressed
Her reverence for a soul that stood
Above the common world as far
As some serene and distant star.

A glorious girl, high-thoughted, bright

And beautiful, with woman's sense,
And woman's tact, and keen insight,
A loving heart, and gay and light

In her assured innocence ;
A scholar eager still to learn,
A teacher careful to instruct,
She toiled her daily bread to earn,
She toiled high wisdom to discern,

And in the pleasant evenings pluckt
The fruit that was her young life's dream.
To see him held in such esteem.

Chiefly she had with men conversed,

Men of fresh mind and generous heart,—
With youth in noble dreams immersed,
And sages, rich in lore, who erst
Had dreamt like dreams of life and art ;
And therefore she more womanly
And gentle was than other girls

Whose gossip is with women ; she
Enshrined in her clear modesty,
And walking pure amid its perils,
Was worshipped like a saint, and grew
More womanly the more she knew.

Here had their widowed mother spent,
In patient toil, her latter days,
Days sweetened by a blithe content,
And by a household love that lent
Sunshine and song to all her ways ;
And by respect of all the wise,
And by the love of all the good,
And by the faith whose hopes arise,
Like evening stars in darkening skies,
Soft-pulsing o'er the dewy wood ;
And the fine odour of her grace
Still fondly lingered in the place.

Paul Gaunt.

IN the still old town
Where the minster towers
Toll the passing hours
To the chiming College Crown,
Sat the sister and her brother
In their quiet room,
Amid the gathering gloom
Of murky storm-girt weather ;
She restless fingers twitching,
And he absorbed in sketching.

With a long, low wail
Moaned the fateful sea,
Foretelling woful tale
Of wreck and misery
By and bye to be :
And the fisher-women,
Gathering in bands,
With the cry of human
Anguish wrung their hands,
Gazing seaward ever
With a yearning and a shiver,
As they searched the wave and spray
For the boats that sailed away
At the dawning of the day.

Deep wrapt up in scheming
Was his inventive brain,
While his sister, fondly dreaming,
Seemed to nurse an aching pain,

And the women's eyes were streaming
Tears upon the sand like rain.
But mastered by the craving
Of inventive thought,
How the sea was raving
Then he heeded not,
Nor how hearts were braving,
Or trembling, at their lot.

On a forehead massive
Brooded thought serene ;
Seemed his face impassive,
And features sharp and lean—
Features thin and pale and lean ;
Fingers long and steady
Held pencil ever ready
For some new machine
Shaping in his brain, I ween.
And her restless fingers twitched

As he brooded on, and sketched,
And the fisher-women gazed
From the sand-dunes, numb and dazed ;
But he neither felt nor wondered
At the anguish of their pain,
Only silent sat, and pondered !
Tracing o'er and o'er again
Novel figures from his brain.
So he often found relief
From the bitter thought of grief
Which his heart was keen to feel,
But his hand was weak to heal ;
And the world was all forgot
In his novel forms of thought,
Though its passion and its pain
Gave the hint on which he wrought.

Then his sister, turning slowly,
With a wistful melancholy,

As of one with listening weary,
As of one with waiting dreary,
As of one who had a pain
Lying where a joy had lain,
Said, "The sky is wild and eerie,
And I fear there will be sorrow
On the sea, and on the land
A dread of the to-morrow,
And the forms upon the sand.
I am heavy as I think ;
I am dull and scarce know why ;
But I feel as on the brink
Of some unknown misery.
Shall I sing? You must be weary :
And that pencil-scratch is dreary
With its monotone. I'll hum
Something just as it will come,
Something just as it is sent—
Never mind the instrument.

Milly Gaunt's Song—LATE, LATE.

Late, late in May the hawthorn burst in bloom,
Long searched by chill blasts from the nipping East;
Late, late the fire-balls flamed upon the broom,
And golden-barr'd bees began to feast.

Late, late the blue-bells in the forest glade
Made skyey patches, starred with primrose sheen,
And lady-ferns, uncoiling in the shade,
Turned serpent-folds to plumes of waving green.

Late, late the bright fringe tipped the branching spruce.
And golden fingers sprouted on the pine ;
And June came in before its curls were loose,
Or laughed laburnum in the clear sunshine.

Late, late they came, but yet they came at last,
Lilac, laburnum, sweet Forget-me-not ;

But waiting for my summer, summer passed
In flowerless hoping, and in fruitless thought.

Came sunshine to the blossoms and the flowers,
Came gladness to the earth and wandering bee,
Came balmy airs and dews and tender showers,
But my spring never came, for ne'er came he.

Paul. Why, Milly dear, what is the matter with
you?

There's a crack in your voice, and a shake in your
head,

As if out on the strike, and with nothing to do,
You had gone to the street with a baby or two,

And a ballad to sing for your bread;

Come, try something else, and we'll see what is
wrong,

And how that cracked quaver got into your song

Milly sings again—ROW, BURNIE, ROW.

Row, burnie, row

Through the bracken-glen ;

Row, burnie, row

By the haunts of men ;

Where the golden cowslips glint,

Through the wild thyme and the mint,

By the barley and the lint ;

Row, burnie, row.

Row, burnie, row

Tinkling under heather bells ;

Row, burnie, row

Down to where my true love dwells :

Singing songs down to the sea,

Singing of the hill countrie,

Singing to my love from me :

Row, burnie, row.

Row, burnie, row

To him that's far awa,

Row, burnie, row,

And mind him o' us a'.

Say there's naething I regret,

Say I never can forget,

Say I love him dearly yet :

Row, burnie, row.

Row, burnie, row

Through the gowans white,

Row, burnie, row

Gleaming in the light :

Let ilka ripple bear

Fond kisses to him there ;

O my heart it's longing sair.

Row, burnie, row.

Paul. There, that's how a girl should sing. I've
been forgetting,
While puzzling out notions that nobody heeds.
Stupid owl that I am ! not to see you were fretting,
While I sit here all day, neither gaining nor getting,
With the fancies an idle head breeds.
Yet there's something in this one, I think ; but
it's true,
I always think that while the fancy is new.

Milly. Yes, Paul, I'm sure there is,
There's always something in it :
Only leave it for a minute,
For it's worse than loneliness
When you sit beside me silent,
Like some shadowy mountain island
Washed by waves I cannot see,
Hid in canopy of clouds,
Peopled too by shining crowds

That speak to you, but not to me.
It's like waiting—don't you see?—
By some veiled mystery.
Don't go back, now, to your scheming ;
It will do you good to rest ;
Thought will drift away to dreaming
In a brain too hardly pressed :
And this *strike* so long has been
That my little purse grows lean.

Paul. Ah ! the strike !—yes, it's dreadful, I know :
it is war

For the wealth of the rich, but the life of the poor :
Our new, modern warfare, and holier far
Than ever was bannered by Cross or star,
Or battled by hero pure :
It is Capital, gathered on credit, that stands
Against Capital, gathered in brains and hands.
I'm a workman, dear, and I mean to be ;

I like the sound of the hammer and saw,
And the *feel* of a file in my hands, and to see
Work neatly done, as it ought to be,

Turned out without fault or flaw,
Nutt and rivet and nail and screw
All driven home, dear, right and true.

I hate a fellow that scamps his job,

False work never yet won the day ;
I'd sooner footpad it, and steal and rob,
Or go pick-pocketing through a mob,

Than play that dirty play ;
It's the pride of our land that the work is good
In its wool and cotton, and iron and wood.

Let us stand by our order, then, fighting it out :

True men they are, in the main, and right ;
The quarrel is good, and our hearts are stout,
And every one knows what it's all about,

And our patience is our might :
A fairer wage, and a shorter day,
It is time we had time to think and pray.

Yes, the strike is right : it is war, of course,
And in war we must count upon rubs and blows ;
And who may be better, and who may be worse,
Who may be stricken with grief and remorse,
Only the end shall disclose :
But true to each other, our life will be more
And fuller and richer than ever before.

Milly. Ah ! well, I do not know ;
I hope it may be so.
But I judge by what I see,
And my heart is failing me.
Have you heard young Darrel's song
Of the famine of the coal ?
Madame Hester thinks he's wrong,

Though she sang with all her soul,
Till my blood was tingling hot,
As I thought upon the lot
Of the poor; I wish you heard
How she wailed it, every word
Like the breaking of a chord.

Song—THE COAL FAMINE.

Coal, nor wood, nor peat,
Nothing to put in the grate !
And the east wind hurtling along the street.
Dashing the windows with rain and sleet,
And sifting through roofing and slate.

What are the bairns to do,
With their duds so worn and thin,
For all the day long, all the night through,
Shaking the soot from the smokeless flue,
The gusts come roaring in?

O I miss their noisy din,
That once had made me scold,
For now they are sitting so pinched and thin,
With a shiver without, and a gnawing within,
Silent, and dreary and cold.

For there's little to boil or bake,
Little to roast or fry,
Little of daylight when we wake,
Little to do but shiver and shake
As the chill, dark hours go by.

The great lord's iron heel,
The rich man's selfish pride
They were hard to bear; but it's worse to feel
The poor man turning a heart of steel
To the poor man at his side.

Milly. So Darrel sings his song;

Madame Hester says he's wrong,
And she is wise and good,
Yet the poet's eye sees more
Than is often understood
By the Reason we adore.

Paul. Ah ! that's but one side of the picture, dear :
And it's only their feelings that poets sing,
They heed not for principles solid and clear :
They are right so far, but you ought to hear
How soundly their hearts will ring
To the human truth on the other side :
See, here is another vein Darrel tried.

Song—I BOUGHT A NOSEGAY.

I bought a nosegay for my girl ;
It cost me more than I will say ;
One sprig she set in a golden curl,
And one on her bosom lay :

And as we circled in the light,

And as we rested in the shade,

I wished they had been jewels bright,

And gold that never would fade.

O rose that drooped on her bosom!

O crimson flower in her hair!

I was shamed at the paltry cost of the
blossom—

But how could it wither there?

I bought the labour of a man ;

It cost me less than my fading flower ;

His eye was bright, his cheek was wan,

And he wrought in sun and shower ;

He gave me faithful toil and skill,

And work to last for many a year,

And he had children's mouths to fill—

But I grudged his labour dear.

O men so handy and humble!

O men who work and weep!
It shames me to think how my heart could grumble,—
For only men are cheap.

Milly. Yes, that's like his noble heart,
Always true to the weaker part,
Always touched by any wrong,
Always generous child of song.—
O were he but as true
To himself as to his view
Of the world and all we do!
Yet I doubt if you or he
Know the present misery.
Listen to the cry bewildering
Of the women at the doors,
And the wail of the small children
Lying hungry on the floors,
While the lads draw in their breath
With their lips as white as death.

Great their patience to endure,
And if strikes will bring a cure
To their ills, why, fight it out :
But for aught that's come about
Hitherto, to me they seem
The lean kine in Pharaoh's dream,
Eating up the bigger wage
By their idleness and debt,
Hurrying down another stage
To a sorrow deeper yet.
O I do not understand—
We women never do—
But I somehow think the land
Was kindlier to the hand
Of the workman long ago,
When the furnace ne'er was quenched.
And the work was never flinched,
Nor the bellows ceased to blow
On the cinders all aglow.

Paul. Why, of course, it was, Milly : for master
and man

Were brothers, and stood by each other then ;
They ate at the same board, and drank the same can,
And the Master *was* master, and true artizan,

And knew all the craft of his men :
He was not a fellow that handled quills
With a head for nothing but "doing bills."

And his men were men to him, not mere hands,
And their only quarrel was who should smite
The deftest blows where the anvil stands ;
And they were not driven by rough commands "

Off to the left and right.—
Ah ! a little more human brotherhood
Would go far to sweeten the workman's mood.

And a 'prentice lad, with brains in his head,
Might look to his master's daughter then :

But what would our fine Misses say, if we pled,
In the fustian jackets that win their bread,

For the gloved hand that plays with the rein?
Why, they hardly deign even to know the yard
Where their money is made by our labour hard.

That's what is wrong, dear. The wealth of the land
Comes from the forge and the smithy and mine,
From hammer and chisel, and wheel and band,
And the thinking brain, and the skilful hand,
And yet we must toil and pine,
That one may be rich by driving quills,
And a floating credit of Banker's bills.

They call that capital! it is a lie;
The capital force of the country still
Is the power of work, the nice-judging eye,
The brain to perfect machinery,
And the knack of well-trained skill;

These are the source of all our gains ;
Much your credit will do without hands and brains.

This can't go on long ; we must have our share ;
And the strike will do it, if anything can :
Look, the rich grow richer everywhere,
And the poor grow poorer, and fuller of care :
Can that be the good God's plan—
Palaces yonder on airy hills,
And hovels down here among smoking mills?

Just then on the creaking stair
A weary step was heard,
And she started from her chair
With an eager, wistful air,
And her heaving bosom stirred,
But she uttered not a word,
Only drew a long breath in
Till her parted lips grew thin,

Only flushed o'er all her face,
With a look of tender grace,
As a worn and haggard man
Dragged his form into the room,
Coming from the murky gloom
With a ghastly face and wan,
And great eyes all aflame.
Seemed the gaunt and lanky form
Like the spirit of the storm,
Haggard at the work he came
To perform.
Then Paul ; "Why, Milly dear,
It is Lyell ; what is wrong ?
He is wet and ill, I fear ;
But we'll give him hearty cheer :
Welcome, brother, come along :
Never welcomer to me
Face of one long lost at sea
Coming unexpectedly."

Austen. What is wrong, Paul? Nothing that I know of ; all is right.

In this best of possible worlds, how should anything be wrong?

All is ordered, man, by perfect love and wisdom Infinite,
To go smooth as your machinery, and blithe as
Milly's song.

As for me, I have been going up and down, and
to and fro,

Like a personage you've read of in that queer old
Book of Job,

With a tinker, given to drinking, and his company
was low,

But he taught me one or two things that are happen-
ing on our globe ;

And my old professor says nothing's worthy more
of praise

Than an ardent thirst for knowledge in our curious
youthful days.

We camped in woodland corners 'mong the oak
scrub and the broom,

With a clear stream tinkling near us, and the pine-
scents in the air,

And our beds were white and fragrant with the
hawthorn's falling bloom,

And our caldron daily smoking with the coney and
the hare :

These fellows have an eye for the picturesque and
pleasant.

And a gentlemanly taste, too, for killing grouse
and pheasant.

And he taught me no small wisdom, which is good
for human souls,

About the call of night-birds, about weasels, about
moles,

About salmon in their season, and to track the
honey-bee,

About stalking of the red-deer, and all bird economy,

About tinkering of kettles, and cookery of game,
About doctoring of horses, and transmuting of the
same,

About spaeing people's fortunes, and breeding in
and in,

And also a philosophy that quite gets rid of sin.

Yet we had to part; and also I hope never more
to meet him,

He was such an arrant scoundrel, vermin worse
than any rat;

And though I'm not particular, I really had to beat
him,

And there's no gospel surer than that I was right
in that.

Now, I want a job of work, Paul; I have thews
and sinews strong,

And the arm that beat the tinman might wheel a
barrow long.

I cannot be a craftsman, I cannot ply a tool,
I cannot use the chisel and the hammer and the rule ;
I know nothing of your art, lad ; but I could bear
 a hod,
And handle pick and shovel, and carry earth and sod.
Will you find me work to do, then? I am tired of
 working brains,
Like a treadmill yielding nothing but my labour
 for my pains.

A strike among the workmen ! That's unlucky, I
 confess :
I don't much wonder at it, but I'm sorry none the less :
Sorry for myself, perhaps ; for it rather mars my
 scheme ;
But like other hopes I've cherished, it was maybe
 all a dream :
And I think I feel their troubles even kèener than
 my own—

I have had so many lately it is not worth while to
moan

For another more or less ; one is stunned upon the
wheel

By the first sharp wrench of agony ; the rest you
hardly feel :

They are but the after-pains of an anguish that is
past,

Natural throbbings of the sorrow which your life has
overcast.—

Yes, of course, you have the right to work or idle,
as ye will,

To quench the blazing forges, and to stop the hum-
ming mill,

And all the other rights by which you hope to
right your wrongs,

And by and bye to turn the people's sorrows into
songs.

Yet there are noblest rights which the noble only use

In fearfulness and trembling for the passions they
let loose.

Nations have the right of battle—none more sacred
that I know

Than the right to take your weapon, and to hurl it
at your foe,

The right to kill a creature made in likeness of his
God,

To trample a grand being underneath the reeking
sod.

Yet the wanton use of battle is the shame of history,
Turning back the tide of progress, and of man's
prosperity.

This is now your day of power—and I am glad
that it is yours ;

But shall workmen just repeat the sin of kings and
conquerors ?

As the nations cease from battle, shall the classes
rouse the fray,

And scatter wanton sorrow for a shilling more a day?
And what, now, if your fellows, lounging near the
pot-house, idle,

Get to loaf about, and like it, get to hate both
spur and bridle?

Lose the habit of hard labour, with its manliness;
and then

Comes the wreck of all you hope for in the wreck
of noble men?

When you organise a strike, it is war you organise:
But to organise our labour were the labour of the
wise,

To bind it all together in the bundle of one life
Manifold in gift and service, linked as husband unto
wife,

With a common fund of skill and thrift. That partly
was my thought

When I came to you: I dreamt that, if I shared
their weary lot,

If I got a fustian jacket, and a hammer, and a
file,
Or wheeled the hodman's barrow, if for nothing
better fit,
And ate the bread of labour, maybe sweetened with
a smile,
And faced an earnest Universe as earnestly as It,
Then some day they might trust me; for I know
that they are jealous
Of the patronage outside them, but will hearken to
their fellows
Who have laboured at the bench with them, and
handled the same tools,
And who know the hearts of workmen, that they
are not rogues nor fools.
Ah! well; no matter now; I daresay that was all a
dream;
But my way of life is changed, Paul; my sunshine
was a gleam

Through storm-clouds darkly gathering, now the sky
is overcast,
Like the day there, out of doors, where the rain is
pelting fast;
And I somehow cannot hang on to the skirts of
the genteel,
I would make the change as thorough as the change
in heart I feel;
'The more obscure my life is the fitter now for me.
'The more mechanical its toil the happier I shall be :
'Though I look not for much happiness, yet that
may also come ;
At least I will not whine; if I have grief I can be
dumb.
Can you help me, Paul ? I must have work, and yet
some leisure too ;
Some day I'll tell you more, perhaps—yet wherefore
burden you ?
Enough ; I must have leisure, for I have a task to do.

Paul, with sorrow, caught the tone
Of the sorrow of his friend ;
Yet he made as if its moan
Were a thing for mirth alone,
And it seemed that he would spend
All his shafts of homely wit
And of ridicule on it.
To think of Lyell with a file
Grinding slowly at a wheel !
Or with hod of lime or tile,
Tramping where the gangways reel !
Or smiting with a hammer
'Mid the clangour and the clamour
Of the anvil and the bellows
And the smithy, and the fellows
Who can nothing more than play
Mighty hammers, day by day !
He, the scholar of his year,
Knowing Latin, knowing Greek,

Knowing all the gentle hear,
Knowing all that sages speak
Of number and of form,
Of the laws that guide the storm,
Of fluids and their powers,
And of how they may be ours !
Laughing light, and chuckling low
As he tossed it to and fro,
Paul kept playing with the thought,
Mocking at it, scorning it,
Jesting with the kind of wit
Which a loving heart will hit,
Though of humour knowing nought.
Then he said that one who knew him
Had lately spoken to him
Something about editing
A newspaper—which, of course,
Was ridiculous, and worse—
But it was the very thing

For Austen with his free
Flowing pen, and fresh discourse.
O the pleasure it would be,
Reading leaders every night
Sparkling with a modern light,
Yet with wisdom from the ages
Mellowing all the thoughtful pages!
Would not Milly surely like
Austen's papers on the strike?
And perhaps himself might pen
Just a letter now and then.

In silence Austen heard,
Never uttering a word,
But the strong lip gave a quiver,
And his head bowed very low,
And there was a tremulous shiver,
Like the ripple on a river
When a passing wind doth blow,

And the tears began to flow—
Tears that sorrow failed to bring,
But the touch of love unsealed,
Like the coming of a spring
That awoke the heart it healed.
And the others did not speak,
For they knew that words are weak
As the drip of falling rain
'Mid the silence of our pain,
And in his grief they saw
Something touching them with awe.
Something more than natural grief,
Something more than met the eye.
Something mad for the relief
Of a hopeless sympathy.
Now, because the strain was o'er.
He yielded to the throng
Of better thoughts that rushed along
Through every open door,

And every chamber of his mind,
Uncontrolled and unconfined.
Wild, without, the wind was roaring,
Wild, without, the rain was pouring,
Battering on the window pane ;
And the sullen waves were crashing
Loud amid the angry dashing
Of the drifting sleet and rain.
Wild the anguish of his pain,
Yet they bade it not to cease,
For it was the way of peace.

But by and bye she went
Softly to her instrument,
Touched a chord or two, and then
Deftly warbled forth a strain,
Not without its shade of pain.

*Milly sings—*SO SHE WENT DRIFTING.

So she went drifting, drifting

Over the sea,

Thinking that others were shifting ;

Surely not she.

She no anchor had lifted,

Meant not to move ;

Only she slowly drifted

Deep into love.

O she had held that a maiden

Should not be first

To sigh with a heart love-laden,

And long and thirst ;

And mad at herself for her longing,

Hard things she said,

Then was mad at herself for wronging

The love she had.

He knew not how she was yearning

Just for a word,

And went on his way discerning

Nothing he heard :

Only he sometimes wondered

What she could mean--

O had he only pondered

He might have seen.

So she went drifting, drifting

Day after day;

So he went shifting, shifting,

Farther away;

O but a word would have done it—

Word never spoken ;

So she went drifting, drifting

With her heart broken.

Book Fifth.

PROSPECTS.



Visitors.

THAT night ; though the storm was still raging,
Austen and Paul went forth,
Arm in arm, braving the rain, and the chill roaring
wind from the North ;
It was seven on the Minster-clock as they knocked
at a staring green door,—
Grass-green it of the brightest,—and a brass plate
on it bore
The name, Andrew Downie, Esquire, in letters
readable, large,

All standing out of the panel, shining and big as a
targe.

Yet he was kindly and human, a plump, little man
by the fire,

Slipperd and cheery, drawing the wine and the
walnuts nigher,

Not without kettle on hob, not without spirit-case too.
For an easy bachelor evening, lonely, with nothing
to do :

Prosy and garrulous he, and his face brightened
gladly to see

Paul and his student friend come to give him their
company.

Andrew Downie, Esq.

Try the port, sir; it ought to be good,
It cost me a mint of money;
It's been twenty years out of the wood,
With a taste of the olives it should
Go down like the new milk and honey.

I bought it in, let me say,
When we sold up old Drunkeller;
He was famed for his wines in his day,
And the Duke carried half away,
But the rest came to my poor cellar.

It was I that wound up his affairs,
And a pretty mess they were in :
He had gone on 'Change, and the bears
, Turned his acres quickly to shares ;
They'd have jobbed him soon of his skin.

He was bit with the railways first,
And then he went in for mines,
Wheal-Bwbl, Wheal Dydl, Wheal Wuhrst,—
I lost a big thing when they burst ;
But they smashed him clean off the lines.

We sold him up for a song
To a stupid stocking-weaver ;
I always thought we were wrong :
And he did not hold out long—
Heart, they said—but it was his liver.

Had we waited, instead of a loss,
He might have been good for a million ;
There was shale in those acres of moss,
The old laird and his pony would cross,
With his wife sticking fast to the pillion.

I told them to wait ; peats may blaze,
But they don't fly away in a hurry :
But money was tight in those days,
And the Banks took to watching your ways,
So we sold, like fools, in a flurry.

Well, I bought in his port, as I said,
And it's sound every bottle as yet,
Every cork with a wig on its head,
And a bouquet might quicken the dead,
Or flavour a bailie with wit.

But you sip it as if you were stung ;
You'd prefer it perhaps with more body ?
Old port for old fellows ; the young
Like the smack of the wood and the bung,
Or even the flavour of toddy.

Not drink ! and a man in your line !
Well, I don't set up for a teacher,
But a lad that don't take to his wine
Will not do for a learned divine
Or a popular, orthodox preacher.

All the sound, solid parsons, I wist,
Drink their port with a kindly good will :
But your cold water dulls them like mist,
Or they get some heretical twist,
And go on, like the clack of a mill.

O you're not in the preaching way ;
You have come about the newspaper ;
But these Editor fellows they say,
Must be soaked, like a wick, half the day
Ere they light up their evening taper.

Well ; I'd not have believed it before
That so many men of ability
Could be standing about by the score,
Looking out for an open door,
And a job with a little gentility.

Look, there, at that huge pile of letters :—
And that's not the half I am sure :—
All scholars, sir, greatly my betters,
All versed in political matters,
And Science and Literature.

What a wealth of brains there must be
In this fine old country of ours,
Which nobody ever can see
Till he advertises like me
For a man of "original powers."

One has written reviews for the "Times,"
One, paragraphs for the "Spectator,"
One encloses a copy of rhymes,
And another, he rings the chimes
On an "Own Correspondent's" letter.

And there's none of them but would as soon
Criticise the Almighty as not,
And see that the angels kept tune,
And watch that the sun and the moon
Did not squander the light they have got.

Clever fellows, Sir, wonderful clever !

But I want an original mind ;
And these run in the same rut for ever,
Differing only in state of the liver,
And amount of lungs for wind.

You see, I have nothing to do :

I made a bit money, and stopt,
Then I tried this and that, with a view
Of getting some happiness too,
Ere my blossom of life was cropt.

I had hard lines, most of my days,

Rose just, as they say, from the gutters,
Knew little of children's plays,
Or country-folk and their ways,
Since I learnt how to take down the shutters.

We are all of us self-made here ;
So is every one worth his meat,
And I don't know I ever was near
So happy and proud as the year
That I swept the rooms tidy and neat.

Then I thought myself something. I'd stop
And laugh, 'mid the dust, right out,
Looking down on the boys in a shop,
And O what a glory of Hope
Seemed floating then all round about !

Well, I made some money, and then
I thought I would travel a while ;
That enlarges the minds of men,
So they say, but nine out of ten,
Might as well sit and swing on a stile.

Those French fellows gabbled so fast

I could not make out what they said,
And they shrugged and smiled, and went past,
When I spoke their own tongue, till at last
I was well nigh losing my head.

So I wearied of big empty Kirks,

And cafes and pictures and shows,
And the old German towns with their Storks,
And Rome with its wonderful works,
And the Alps with their guides and snows.

Enlarge my mind, did you say?—

Not a bit Sir; I came as I went!
It was six months of wearisome play,
And some photographs got by the way,
And food, like a long fast in Lent.

After that, I bought an estate,
Running still in a rut like the rest ;
I had better have bought a bad debt,
For my money ran down like a spate,
And my bogs grew an absolute pest.

Rural life, lads, is all a mistake,
Seeing nothing but grass fields, and botany,
And sleek, stupid cows half-awake ;
And the birds your morning sleep break,
And weary you with their monotony.

I used to go sauntering round,
And stare at my turnip drills,
Or watch the old crows as they found
Twisting worms in the fresh-ploughed ground,
Or the shadows flit over the hills.

But what human soul could exist
On a vision of shadows and crows,
And the trailing of clouds and mist,
Or the thought of the worms as they twist
Where the turnip or mangold grows?

So I filled with fish-tackle red books,
Sticking flies round my hat out and in ;
But the trout picked the bait from my hooks,
And sniffed at my flies in their nooks,
Though they jumped to a boy's crooked pin.

Well, of all stupid sports that I know,
The absurdest is catching your fish,
Getting tired as you walk to and fro,
Getting wet, too, for nothing, although
A sixpence would get you a dish.

As to shooting, no bird would remain
For a good steady shot ; but as fast
As the pointers would point, they were fain
To be off, and I peppered in vain
As they rose with a whirr, and flew past.

No ; the country is stupid, or worse ;
The mice would get drowned in the cream,
And then—no butter of course,
Or something went wrong with your horse,
Or the eggs vanished off like a dream.

In the country I never could get
What the country is meant to produce ;
But I got in a hank of debt,
Till I advertised it to let,
Or to go, if it must, to the deuce.

Ah! the town, lads, for me! I don't care
Though I never see grass or tree,
Nor leave the old market square,
For there's true life and motion there,
Just to stand on the pavement, and see

Rural women with butter on blades,
Fisher-women with loaded creel,
How they chaffer with wives and maids!
How they storm through the varying shades
Of the passion they feign to feel!

You should see the gardeners too,
With their carrots, like nosegays red:
Their gardens always do—
And there's nothing you want but you
Shall find there, living or dead.

Then on Fair-days and hiring-days—Ah !

It's as good as a play to be there,
As the ploughman jogs up with a straw
In his hat, and the lasses guffaw
At the jokes that are rife in the Fair.

Or on great days, just to see

The trades all out in procession,
The man who is armed *cap-a-pie*,
And Adam and Eve, and the Tree,
And the Serpent, and all the Temptation !

O life, lads, there's nothing like life,

The stir and crush of the folk,
The bargaining, beering, and strife,
And the small boys with trumpet or fife,
And the gingerbread and the rock !

They talk of the fine country air,
But it never agreed with me ;
I'm a town-bird, you see, and don't care
For the daisies and butter-cups there,
As I do for the dulse and the sea.

As for walks—what walk could you take
Like a stroll to the point of the pier,
To watch how the long tangles shake,
And the gull and the kittiwake
Dive and bob till your dinner hour's near?

But the Newspaper ! well, here am I
In the town, and with nothing to do,
And I hear it is going to die
Of a Radical scamp who must try,
Forsooth, a halfpenny Review.

Now, the paper is part of the Town ;

It would not be the same place without it :

I'd as lief the Kirk-steeple fell down :

Let it cost me a plack or a crown,

We'll print it, sir, never you doubt it.

It was always here, as I say,

Coming out every week like the Sunday :

Quite enough too ; I can't see a way

To have accidents fresh every day,

Or eclipses each Friday and Monday.

But business is business, and so

We must make it pay, if we can,

And I want one whose pen will not go

In a rut of set phrases, you know,

But a real original man.

As to politics, them I don't mind ;
They go round and round like a jig ;
I'm a Tory myself, but I find
Nothing pays so well as a kind
Of steady respectable Whig.

You may gird at the parsons a bit,
They've got Sunday all to themselves,
And don't spare their hearers a whit,
But I won't have an infidel wit,
Like that fellow Voltaire on the shelves.

I'm not pious—I never had time,
Though I learned all the Proverbs at School,
And some of the Psalms too in rhyme,
And I know that Isaiah's sublime,
And the Parables beautiful.

You must let religion alone ;
I'll have nought of the infidel kind,
We must write in a sound moral tone,
And not like that halfpenny drone,
But with fresh original mind.

And the main thing after all,
Must be always the Town's affairs—
How the Provost keeps up the ball,
And the names the Town-Councillors call
Each other, and nobody cares.

Then the shipping and harbour dues,
And what's to be done with the bar,
And the kirks with their empty pews,—
O there's plenty of capital news
For the paper, without going far.

Then, there's accidents, railway smashes,
And how the poor shareholder smarts,
And the folk struck by fierce lightning-flashes,
And now and then mercantile crashes,
Or children run over by carts:

There's the Circuit-Courts, and the Member,
And the soirees wound up with a dance,
And the College, of course, in November,
And the woman the Queen will remember,
With her three little babies at once.

There's the stocking-trade, and the police,
The catch of herrings and whales,
And the cost of the wool in the fleece;
Who cares about war or peace
When our fishers have stormy gales?

If you like, you may give us a claver
About folk of the Town long ago,
Or a song with some body and flavour,
Though I don't deny that I never
Read poems, unless I don't know.

What we want is the news of the Town,
To know all about ourselves clearly;
Now, I like your looks, I own,
And I don't care although I come down,
With a hundred-and-fifty yearly.

There, I'm tired of these long-winded scrawls:
Each harder to read than the other;
O they're all of them Peters and Pauls,
Apostles of Wisdom that calls
In the streets, always making a pother.

But you have some sense, for you can

Be silent while others are speaking ;

Now, I've told you all of my plan,

Only mind, it is always a man

Of original powers I am seeking.

When they came out to the street, Austen burst
into a shout

Of such riotous, loud laughter, which he strove to
check in vain,

That neighbours to the windows came with curious
peering out,

As peel on peel rung, echoing, till the mirth grew
very pain

And when he would have ceased, it only louder
rose again.

Why, Paul, he said, at length, you'll kill me with
that solemn look :

Don't you know, man, I'm an editor, and real
"original"—

A respectable, Whig Editor, with a right to bring
to book

The Provost and the parsons and the halfpenny
Radical,

And to freely criticize all the local and the small?

Original powers of mind, Paul, to tell the catch
of herrings,

And the nosegays of red carrots, and the current
price of wool,

To describe the hiring markets, and the lasses, and
their fairings,

And profound examinations of our learned grammar
school,

And the doings of the Councillors who call each
other fool?

Was there ever luck like mine?—and I just come
from playing tinker !

O the fresh thoughts I shall utter about the whaling
ships !

If the Bailies only knew that a true original
thinker

Was to criticize their speeches, and their little snacks
and trips !

And how that halfpenny Radical shall sink in dark
eclipse !

There's my destiny at last found, in this queer
Universe,

To play respectable Whig on a hundred-and-fifty
a-year ;

A man of powers original paid duly to rehearse
The condition of the weather and the Provost, who,
I hear,

Is a man of no condition, and a brewer of small
beer.

Well, we come into this world, wrapt up in super-
fine cocoon,
Soft and silky, and our business is to reel it off
again,
And to know ourselves but worms, and care for
nought beneath the moon,
But to look about for what will eat, and eat it
there and then,
And get rid of all fine feelings, and high dreams
of Gods and men.

I've been winding my cocoon off quite rapidly of
late,
And am very nearly naked, and ready to devour
All that I can set my teeth to—and I am not
delicate—

Heaven and earth, they say shall pass away, like
fading autumn flower,
But my heaven is gone, and earth alone has gript
me with its power.

Is it worth while living longer after you have reach-
ed the stage
When life at last is possible, and you are purged
of all
The nobler thoughts you cherished, and the hopes
of a great age,
Coming with diviner visions to reverse the early Fall,
And the soul is fairly harnessed to the local and
the small?

Ah! if one could only leave it, ere all higher dreams
have left!
Could but die before the death of that which is our
life indeed!

Could cease to be or ever one is utterly bereft
Of that gleam of something better which may
 chance to be the seed
Of a hope for human hearts, when ours shall cease
 to beat and bleed !

Nay, I do not rave and maunder; I am not a love-
 sick boy
Whose life is all washed out, while he is whining
 through his teens ;
But there's that has come upon me, which has
 taken all the joy
From my being ; and when one has lost the staff
 on which he leans—
Well, he finds that he is lame, and maybe knows
 not what it means.

Perhaps I'll tell you more, Paul, on some day by
 and bye.

Perhaps I'll keep my sorrow to myself—I cannot tell ;
I know that I can trust you ; but then I know not why
I should bind upon your spirit that which binds me
like a spell,
Or lay on you the burden which is crushing me to
hell.

I am weary, O how weary ! of all beneath the sun ;
There's no nature in my laughter, and no sweetness
in my thought,
I seem to have no Faith or Hope ; my lights have
one by one
Died out, and left an evil smoke : God help me, I
am not
Good company this evening ; better leave me to my
lot."

But they did not sunder yet, and the gloomy mood
went off,

And the itch of laughter came again, and mordent
mockery,
And above the wind and rain arose the hard
metallic scoff
About Editors and powers and the fishers and
the sea ;
And in sooth there was no nature and no sweetness
in his glee.

Book Sixth.

RELIEF.

Milly Gaunt.

AFTER they left, she sat a little while,
Now brooding thoughtful, now with flickering
smile
Playing about her lips, and in her eyes,
As the flame flickered in the fire likewise,
And leaped up in the curling smoke, or lay
Over the coal and purred itself away.
Thus she a while to happy fancies yielding
A willing tribute of sweet castle-building,

Saw in the gleaming coal a hero strong,
And a fond lover, and a blissful throng
Of varied circumstance and generous life,
When maiden blossom fruited into wife ;
Till looking up, behold an hour had passed !
And wondering how the time had flown so fast,
She wondered on a little more, to know
If still the happy clock as quick would go
When fancies grew to facts, and she should be
All that the fire had pictured curiously ;
Then starting up, went tripping down the stair,
Singing with cheerful heart a lightsome air—
A lightsome air about the gallant lad,
Who fired the heather with his white cockade.

High beauty her's : a face as marble white,
Shaded with glossy braids as black as night,
But full of health, and clear intelligence,
And cultured grace, and woman's delicate sense.

A noble, generous spirit, meet to be
The helpmate of a noble destiny,
Strong in all duty, in ambition high,
Open in thought, and broad in sympathy,
With nothing little, save the little ways
Which brighten home, and are a woman's praise.

All day she had been teaching in the school,
And still at night, though weary of the rule
Of noisy mirth and sullen dulness, she
Had work to do, and did it cheerfully—
Training deft fingers to the finest chords,
And wedding the flute-voice to liquid words
Of Scottish song, or German *lieder* high,
Or roundelay of France or Italy.
She had the artist soul and artist voice,
And in the gift of song she would rejoice
As doth the skylark trilling forth its lay
At early dawn and noon and close of day.

Thus giving lessons in the evening, she
Lightened home cares by that loved industry.

A bright young girl, as glad as summer air,
A laughing rosy girl, with sunny hair
That loosely rayed about a joyous face
Like a gold glory, tripped with winsome grace
About her room, when Milly entered singing,
And picked a letter up, which gaily flinging
Up to the ceiling, she caught as it fell,
And danced about, and tossed it high and well.

“A letter, a letter, Miss Milly, a letter !
Now don't stiffen up so, as if you knew better
Than to care for a letter that's all about you—
Such a wonderful letter, and every word true !
And it proves you're a lady—but you're that, dear,
already—

But it makes you out clearly a something that's nearly

As good as a Princess, my own Cinderella,
Who trots every night, with that horrid umbrella,
Through the sleet and the slush to poor me who
am nothing

But a commonplace lassie with nought of romance.

But I always felt sure that you went home to dance
With the beautiful Prince who was fuming and
frothing,

Till you came to the ball: and now it's all true!

But you shan't read the letter that's all about you,
Unless you first sing me a ballad or song—

Something awfully good, now, and dreadful and long,
That I can't sleep for thinking of it and of you;

For I want just to know, darling, what people do
When they hear the clock ticking there all the
night through.

I've tried it again and again, but I go

Always to sleep in a minute or so.

Therewith she tossed it gaily through the room,
Now high in light, now caught it in the gloom,
Nor would she settle down, or part with it,
Being with maiden mischief wholly smit,
Till Milly sung a ballad or a song,
Which could not be too terrible or long :
Something pathetic that should make her weep,
Or something dreadful till her flesh should creep ;
Something, at least, to banish thought of sleep.
So in the dusk, Milly, in accents low,
“ My mother used to sing this long ago : ”—

THE THREE BROTHERS' CAIRN.

They were three brothers tall and strong,
And they stood by the low Grange gate ;
There was Ranald and Ralph and Hamish big,
And their looks were hard as Fate ;
Yet they all had kissed their little brother, Max,
As he slept in the morning late.

Then up and rode a gay cavalier,
With a haughty grace, I ween ;
His doublet bright of the velvet white
Was slashed with the dark moreen,
And with golden spurs and silver bells
He came prancing over the green.

Up and rode the gay cavalier,
And leapt down from his selle ;
Says, "Where is now fair Marjorie?
And where is Max as well?
And why that gloom, like the look of doom,
Upon your faces, tell !"

Light and careless the words he spoke,
As he flicked the foam from his knee ;
And careless and light, and haughty and bright
The glance of his eye so free ;
As if he would say, Look black as ye may,
But where is Marjorie?

“ We go a-fishing, Lord Earl,” they said,

“ The morning is dull and gray,

And the wind in the south ; and Marjorie

Will meet us on the way :

But little Max, at his schooling lax,

Will bide at home this day.”

“ We go a-fishing, Lord Earl,” they said,

“ Now, wilt thou join our sport ?

We are not knights to lead the fray,

Nor wits to shine at Court ;

But the yeoman knows where the May-fly goes,

And the speckled trout resort.”

They fished the stream, and for one they caught

Earl Rupert he caught three ;

They fished the mere, and their lines broke there,

But his sport went merrily ;

And ever the darker grew their looks,

The gayer laugh laughed he.

“ Now, when shall we see fair Marjorie

To praise me for my skill,

And to tell her loutish brothers here

They do their fishing ill,

As they saddle and boot, and dress and shoot—

For the clown is clumsy still ? ”

“ The sun is high and hot, Lord Earl,

And she was to meet us then

By the deep black pool, 'neath the shadow cool

Of the rocks in the dowie den ;

For she likes the water-lilies there,

And the rippling water-hen.”

They sped apace to the trysting place,

And lightly still laughed he ;

And by the black pool in the shadow cool

They found fair Marjorie ;

But still and deep, in death's long sleep,

In an open grave lay she.

"Now, choose ye, choose, Lord Earl," they said,

"Who first with you shall fight ;

You have basely laid with the shamèd dead

Our sister, sweet as light ;

We buried her here at morning gray,

And we'll bury you here at night.

We are country bred, and we have not skill

Of fence to match with you ;

And among the three but one sword have we.

For we would no murder do ;

Take Ranald, or Ralph, or Hamish big,

One down, the other is due."

Earl Rupert looked down with an angry frown,

But a tear was in his eye ;

And the gloom was on him, and the light was on them

As he turned disdainfully,

Saying, "As you will, then, gentlemen,

For the honour of Marjorie !"

"The right is mine," said Ranald good,

"'Tis fit the eldest son

Should wipe the shame from an honest name,

And see just vengeance done."

But Hamish pled, he was strong and big,

And it skilled not were he gone.

"Now, settle it 'mong yourselves, good boors,

It is all alike to me ;

But settle it quick, for the mists are thick

On the tops of hill and tree ;

And I have far to ride this night

Across the hill countree."

Then Ranald true the old sword drew,

And set on him with might ;

But scornfully that onset he

Met with his cunning sleight ;

And thrice he trust him through and through,

And thrice he laughed so light.

A raven sat on the withered branch
Of a thunder-blasted tree,
Watching the fight with look askance,
And nodding his head to see,
And when Ranald fell he flapped his wings,
And croaked thrice huskily.

Ralph took the sword from the blood-glued hand,
Saying, "Farewell, brother true,
And God of Right, give me the might
To take the vengeance due
For the broken heart of our Father dear,
And Marjorie and you."

Ralph had the will, though scant the skill,
But supple he was and light,
And warily he thrust and cut,
And skipped to left and right;
And the earl's look changed its high disdain,
Seeing blood on his lace-bands white.

Yet Ralph, too, fell, and shuddered out

His soul into the air ;

And the raven danced and flapped and croaked

On the withered branch and bare :

And the sword it passed to Hamish last,

For but one heart was there.

Big-limbed and strong was Hamish long,

And a fell stroke then struck he,

As the hammer comes down on the anvil brown,

Saying, "Look ye, Lord Earl, and see,

This for Ranald, and that for Ralph,

And this for our Marjorie !"

Big Hamish was strong, and his arm was long ;

Earl Rupert grew faint and slow,

Fair Marjorie's corpse on his sword-arm hung,

And he staggered to and fro ;

Yet his sword went through big Hamish :

But Hamish laid him low.

Ho ! ho ! how the raven clucked and crowed
And danced on the lichened bough ;
There were gouts of blood on the purple bud
Of the heath and ling, I trow,
And great glazed eyes staring up to the skies,
As he lazily dropt below.

Little Max came fishing up the stream
Late in the evening gray,
He wist to find sister and brothers there,
And his heart was light and gay :
What was the foul bird croaking at,
As it heavily hopped away?

Gay in his gold and jewels there,
Gay in his youthful bloom,
Earl Rupert was lying, and Hamish was dying
Under the golden broom,
And Ranald and Ralph were stark beside,
And Marjorie in the tomb.

Close clinging to her side, the blithesome maid
Heard the weird tale, and never word she said,
Only she nearer drew, and trembled more,
Till all was silent save the sullen roar
Of billows thudding on the sandy shore ;
Then vowed the tale was charming, horrid, sad,
And wondered whether Max went fairly mad,
And stirred about to get the music right ;
But they no lesson had, at least, that night.
For Milly read the letter, all amazed,
Now and then wondering if her wits were dazed,
And if she read aright ; then read again,
The double reading doubling all her pain.

It came from Lawyer in a country town
To Lawyer in the city, and set down
The facts in business order, plain and clear ;
How in our quiet glens a lady here
Died somewhat suddenly not long ago,

And left estates unto an only son.
They were not hers by right, and yet by law
Her title was most sure, without a flaw ;
Freely she might enjoy them while she breathed,
Freely she might bequeath them, as bequeathed.
He knew the facts, for he had drawn the will,
And Austen Lyall's claim was good as skill
Could frame a legal deed to sanction wrong,
And rob the orphan, which had grieved him long ;
Yet had he only done as he was bound,
Giving his clients valid law and sound.
Now at the funeral this son went mad,
Insulted kith and kin, was wholly bad ;
Mocked at the minister, and laughed at heaven,
Was barely civil to his lawyer even,
And gathered all the rogues and beggars near
To eat the feast made for his mother's bier :
Inexplicable, unless of reason reft.
Then on the morrow afterwards he left,

No orders given, no charge to any one,
No single duty of a landlord done ;
Nor had they since heard from him. He was seen.
Indeed, that morning on the hillside green
Gazing upon a lonesome mountain tarn,
And talking wildly by the Brother's Cairn,
And never after. They had dragged the mere
And found enough to make his madness clear—
The Hall-keys in a bunch, rusty and brown,
Also the Will that made the place his own,
Which no sane man could leave in such a place :
But of himself they had not any trace.
Some thought him dead, but most believed him mad,
Some held it a good riddance, others sad ;
However that might be, he had to say
The next heir, who was true heir, went away
Twenty odd years ago, and had been wed
To Gerald Gaunt, and both of them were dead,
But there were children ; so, at least, 'twas said.

Now, would the city lawyer look about,
And make inquiries, and resolve the doubt?
Were Austen dead, they were the next of kin;
If mad, as he believed, from pride and sin,
They would have rights to see to, and the Trust
Would charge itself with what was right and just:
The lands were good, and free of bond and debt,
And some loose monies too there were to get;
Could he but find the children any way
Of Gerald Gaunt and Borland's "Bonnie May."

She closed the letter with a moan of pain:
His name was there, and burnt into her brain,—
His name, who was her secret glory and pride;
And yet she could not say he was belied,
And cast the misery from her, as the Saint
Shook off the poisonous viper; she was faint,
And sick at heart, and rose, and said, "Good night:
These are strange tidings, and my head seems light;"

And staggered to the door, and passed away
Into the darkness of the closing day.

“How could he? Oh how could he?” still she said,
“My dream of life is gone, my hope is dead,
Torn like the honey-bag from humble bee,
Nought left me but a short, sharp agony.
How could he?—And my brother loved him so,
So trusted him in all of weal or woe,
So held him stainless of ignoble thought,
The truest friend that ever true life brought!—
Oh, it is not the loss of heritage
That makes life poor; it is that, stage by stage,
Some leave us with a lessening faith in man,
And less of love than when our life began,
Till one day all our shining heaven shall tell
But how the stars once shone, and how they fell.
How could he?—And I held him hero true,
Trained by the age for what the age must do,

Full of its spirit, loyal to its hopes,
And past the stage in which it only gropes ;
A man whom God had ready, when they say,
Where is the Leader, who shall guide our way?
I thought that truth and right was all he craved,
And that for truth and right all risks he braved,
And that he had a noble wisdom proved ;
And so I loved him—but 'twas this I loved.
How could he? Oh, how could he?" Still she said,
"My dream of life is broken, and my hope is dead."

And so when they came jesting up the stair,
And, tickled with quaint fancies, even there
A moment paused to let their mirth explode,
Their laughter jarred on her, and made her load
Press on the sore, till of the sore were born
Some bitter thoughts, and biting words of scorn.

Sure, of a sudden, they were wondrous merry ;

She had not thought such grief could be so cheery
In so short space ; but 'twas a healthy power
That healed a breaking heart in half an hour ;
Easy to break, easy to bind again,
'Twas pity to waste pity on such pain ;
So children wept and laughed, and that was good
But men she wist had been of sterner mood :—
She understood not ; she was dull, no doubt ;
But saw not what there was to jest about :
It looked to her a noble task for one
To chronicle the common life of man,
To tell the daily sorrows of the poor,
To mirror all the ills that they endure,
To watch the tide of mind, and guide its flow,
To speak brave words that made the brave heart glow.
It was the man made service great or small,
For still the noble soul ennobled all
It touched, and little natures made it less.
And a great heart was throbbing in the Press

Which was the prophet's roll of modern man,
And faithful record, he might read who ran.
But then, of course, it was a jest to think
A man of wealth should waste his time and ink
On such mean tasks ; and yet she once had hoped—
No matter what her hope was—there she stopped.

Why, Milly, what is wrong? her brother said.
And she uplift again the drooping head
Which had, a moment, sunk at that sad look
That seemed to read her like an open book :
Nothing, of course, is wrong ; what could be wrong ?
I think that was the burden of the song
Which your friend sung about the Universe.
Of course, it is beneath him to rehearse
The common things of common folk, or right
The wrongs which are not, or which are so light.

Then he : Yes, Milly Gaunt, I said all that ;

In bitterness of soul I uttered what
You echo now in sharper tones than mine,
Big words of little wisdom ; undivine
Because inhuman ; yet they were not barbed
To rankle, nor in mockery were garbed ;
They were not good words to remember, yet
They were not words to move a deep regret.
No matter—they were foolish ; I am well
Rebuked for speech that, like the hot sparks, fell
From burning passion, being fiercely smote,
And sputtering words when all unapt for thought.
But there is more behind this wrath of thine
Than any wild, blind, erring speech of mine.
What is it, Milly ? Why this bitter blame ?
I came to you in sorrow and broken shame,
And untried poverty, and utter need,
Thinking you would not break the bruised reed ;
For there had fallen on me a hapless fate,
A knowledge that has made life desolate,

As when the iceberg drifts on some green shore,
Clasping its wooded bays, and bending o'er
Its sunny meadows, till it lose itself,
Melting on sandy beach, and rocky shelf,
But blighting all the bright flowers with its breath,
And wrapping all the scene in wasteful death.
So had my hope all withered by the fact
Which drifted on me, without will or act
Of mine, and clung to me, and will not part
Till its death-chill has frozen all my heart.
And when my soul was wrung with its sharp pain,
And troubled thoughts were tangling all my brain,
You touched me almost unto hope again.
For that, I thank you : what has changed your mood
I know not, but I owe you only good.
In such a gloom even briefest gleam of light
Is something, though it sink in deeper night :
And what of joy your life has shed on mine
And peace and hope be doubly poured on thine."

Deep toned his voice and trembling as he spoke,
And its great sorrow answering chords awoke,
And almost all her angry purpose broke ;
For it was ringing with the truth sincere,
And deep humility, and she could hear
Her heart beat with the beat of perfect faith
In all he said, which made her pale as death,
And sick at heart, to think that she perchance
Wronged the true soul by misjudged circumstance.
So she : "This sorrow that you may not tell,
Did it concern my brother who loves you well?"
"Nay, surely not ; nor part nor lot has he
In my life, saving in the best of me :
Dear Paul ! was never sunshine to a scene
More than his fellowship to me has been.
But if you care to hear, perhaps 'twere well
The story of a broken life to tell ;
For broken it is, like foam upon the sea
Caught by the wind, and scattered aimlessly."

Knitting his brows, and gathering up his thought,
With lips compressed to hide the pain that wrought
And quivered in them, for a while he gazed
In brooding silence where the faggot blazed.
Then in low tones: "I know not how to speak--
If I say little you will deem me weak;
If I say more, the more will only blight
Another name to set my own name right.
Sometimes the half is better than the whole,
And sometimes worse than none; the dubious soul
Suspects the secret there in what is hid,
And holds the rest but trash. I am forbid,
By that which is more sacred than my right,
To tell you much—to tell you all I might.
There are some sorrows cannot be subjected
To man's construction,—howsoe'er suspected."
And here he paused a while, and, brooding, gazed
Again in silence where the faggot blazed.

But Paul said, Never mind, now ; let it be ;
Milly was wrong ; I never doubted thee ;
She will be sorry ere to-morrow come.
But she apart, biting her lip, and dumb,
With vehement finger crushed a harmless crumb.

Then he again : You hold me rich and proud,
Miss Gaunt, and scornful of the common crowd.
Which never was a common crowd to me,
And now is less than ever, for I see
No hope for me except in hope for those
Who stir your pity with their unvoiced woes.
I too am poor—once reckoned heir of all
A goodly pastoral land, a pleasant Hall,
And the respects and honours which they bring :
But think not I for these am sorrowing.
I had no peace until I cast away
A claim that could not bear the light of day,
The deed of law that was a deed of sin,

Which now is gone to pulp and blotches in
The water-lilied haunt of tern and coot,
Or folds its slush around the brown sedge-root.
But life is poor when its old faiths are gone,
Poorest when man can trust himself alone.—
She started, for it was her own sad thought
He echoed, though he touched a deeper note ;
But silence kept, as he went on to tell
How he had sworn to one who loved him well
An oath he feared to break, and dared not keep,
Which haunted him by day, and banished sleep
With stony horrors from his nights, till he
Was nigh distraught with his great misery.
Enough ; what Milly said was just and true ;
There was a noble work which one might do,
Wielding a truthful pen with heart sincere,
In days whose change was big with hope and fear ;
But he must find the heirs of Borland's May ;
And then no doubt but heaven would guide his way.

Then she rose pale and trembling, and her eyes
Quailed at his glance of questioning surprise ;
Can you forgive me? piteously she pled,
I wronged you in my heart, yet my heart bled
To wrong you ; and it was not with my will :
Yet my heart wronged you—Oh I have done ill.
Our mother was May Borland ; and I feared—
He heard no more ; for never sky was cleared
Of close-piled clouds by April wind and sun,
Unravelling swift what they before had spun,
So suddenly as he from utter sadness,
Sodden and dreary, passed into a gladness
Of joyous gratulation, that forgot
All but the whole relief her words had brought.

Oft in their childhood had their mother told,
In the long winter evenings dark and cold,
Of Borland nestling in its bosk of trees,
Of the great lime filled with the hum of bees,

Of the tall orchard wall with ivy clad,
Where dainty nests the merle and throstle had,
Of the three waters blending in the river
Near where the red-roofed mill was clacking ever,
Of the long windings of the narrow glen
The water-lilied pool and water hen ;
And how the Borlands had been lairds of all
Since the wild Scots drave at the Roman Wall ;
And how her joyous girlhood had been there,
Honoured and petted still as Borland's heir ;
And how the goodly heritage was lost
All for her love, nor did she grudge the cost,
Or only for her children sometimes grieved,
And for her father's love, which was deceived.
These tales the children heard with ear intent ;
Children are fain to know how mothers spent
Their childhood, and to chatter of the day
When the grave matron was as blithe as they,
And went a-nutting through the autumn woods,

Or twined her daisy chain, or sought the nestling
broods.

And Milly, in her secret thoughts, would dream
That some day she should look on hill and stream,
And trace her mother's footsteps o'er again,
With Paul as Laird of all the long green glen.
But he, impatient, called her little fool !
To set her heart on sleepy hill and pool,
Where life is always only half awake ;
And dreams, he said, are fetters hard to break ;
Though they be only shadows you have made,
The life seems passing when the shadows fade.
As for myself, could any man of sense
Abide a dull laird's easy indolence,
Whose talk is all of cattle, turnip field,
And what the hay crop, what the oats will yield,
And how to keep the rabbits and the hares
From midnight poacher cunning with his snares ?
I will be lord of nothing but my mind,

I will be held of nothing that can bind
To vacant drowsiness the busy brain,
Or dull the sense of pleasure or of pain.
My days must be where thought has steadfast rule,
And skilful fingers deftly ply the tool,
And life is growing to a higher sense
Of God's design and man's omnipotence.
So would he silence her : but all the more
She cherished in her heart a secret store
Of hopes ; and now the time had come when she
Saw all she fondly dreamt about to be ;
But the bright cloud which gleamed, afar, like gold,
Felt now as mist about her dim and cold,
Or draggled robes that round her limbs enfold.
Silent she sat, and humbled and ashamed,
And much herself she questioned, much she blamed,
More than was meet, for woman's penitent course
Is prone to low prostrations of remorse.
Close in her bosom that hard letter lay,

And seemed to burn, and waste her life away :
O cursed letter ! O unhappy day !
What should I do ? thus in her heart she said :
For what love hides is raised as from the dead
Some day, and kills the love which covered it,
And frankest truth is more than subtle wit :—
But it will pain him knowing that I know ;
And O the shame ! that I should judge him so !
But Paul, you will be noble still, and true
To the high thought that always guided you.”—
Then Paul, unconscious of a great intent,
But simply natural, following the bent
Of a true heart, and fine instinct of skill,
Said ; Milly, you may go now if you will,
Turn a fine lady, eat and drink the best,
Drive in your carriage, lord it like the rest ;
You’ve always had a leaning that way ; I
Would rather live till nature bids me die,
Would rather die than thrive upon the wreck

Of one I loved. Here falling on his neck,
She hugged and kissed him, vowing ne'er to part,
He had so true a soul, so brave a heart.

But Austen: "You must do, Paul, as you will;
The land is yours, with duties to fulfil—
An heritage which, being lost, implies
Loss of high opportunity likewise,
Loss of ancestral love which clings to you,
Loss of a work which only he can do
Who has men's hearts already on his side,
Looking to him, and willing to confide.
Think, Paul, your heritage is more than fields
Of grass and corn, and what the woodland yields,
'Tis something which could never have been mine.
The love of all the people which will twine
The closer round you from the sense of wrong,
Righted at last, which you have suffered long.
And there is something in the love our folk

Bear to the scion of an ancient stock,
May be unreasonable, may be more
Worthy than things there are good reasons for,
But beautiful, at least, and in its trust
Nobler than money-bargaining and lust.
What of your commune, with its spade and hoe
To till the field, where every man should grow
Enough for simple life, and still the loud,
Gaunt clamours of the swarming city's crowd?
Have I not heard you wisely eloquent
On lonely glens which only deer frequent,
Once filled with homesteads, furrowed by the plough,
And clothed with rustling grain and fruitful bough,
And how the men whose fathers owned it went,
With breaking hearts, to far-off banishment;
And bore to rolling prairies in the West
A rankling sense of wrong in many a breast,
Which made our nation's foes the men who loved it
best?

Surely you will not cast from you the power
To test your cherished thought, and nip the flower
When it is at the fruiting. As for me,
I have thrown off a load of misery.
You call it wreck—I call it haven at last,
Where, bruised and battered, but my danger past,
I am at peace. Paul, I have felt the strain
Of sharp temptation, and the aching pain
Of cold and hunger, and of discontent
With all myself had done, or God had sent ;
I have not known the sleep of a right mind,
Or ate or drunk with honest human kind,
Or felt as if I dared, until this night ;
And you, Paul, would you quench the dawning light
That tips my cloud with silver, and breaks in
With better hope on my dark world of sin ?
Now I have found my work, good work and true,
And I have found the heart good work to do.
Milly was right ; it is the man who makes

Noble or mean the task he undertakes,
Who breathes a godlike spirit into that
He has to do, or makes it stale and flat.
I see my work before me, and my way
Free from embarrassment, and clear as day,
Bright with a throng of hopeful services
That stir within me with a sense of bliss,
And need but righting of this wrong to be
The tide of a new life of joy in me.”
He looked at Milly here, and she at him,
And as she looked, she felt her eyes grow dim
With something gathering in them, then looked
down,
Conscious that he was conscious of the crown
With which her love had crowned him in that look
Which dimmed with pride and gladness. Then he
took
Her hand, and said, “One day, when I have done
Good work, Paul, work which you can look upon

And say, This true man truly played his part—
You'll give me this soft hand; I have her heart
I think, already; even as she has mine,—
Worth little, but hers to take or to decline."

But how his work, and how his wooing sped,
And through what hard experience he was led,
Beaten and buffeted, until at length
He learnt humility, and found it strength,
And the rude block was shapen and inspired
With beauty through his troubles undesired,
As God saw needful for him; that remains
For other days to sing in other strains.

THE END.

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